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FATHER STANISŁAW MUSIAŁ, S.J.: THE COURAGE TO CONFRONT

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FATHER STANISŁAW MUSIAŁ, S.J.: THE COURAGE TO CONFRONT

An Essay Submitted to the
Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts & Sciences of
John Carroll University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Master of Arts

By
Agata Wyszynski
2013

The Essay of Agata Wyszynski is hereby accepted:

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INTRODUCTION

How does one surpass the ordinary, especially when one's ordinary surroundings disclose prejudice and hostility? In her essay entitled, *On Relationship as a Key to Interreligious Dialogue*, Doris Donnelly observed that there is "...goodness to be seen in ordinary people doing ordinary things under extraordinary circumstances — people whose lives are a powerful witness to their faith."¹ One such ordinary person was Father Stanisław Musiał, S.J., whose Jesuit education, friendship with Jews, and participation in dialogue and negotiations with Jews allowed him to transcend the anti-Semitic culture of the post-World War II epoch in Poland. While his humility distinguished him as an ordinary person, it is all the more important that Father Musiał be studied because of his willingness to confront difficult truths when others looked the other way. This essay argues that until such skills are understood in overlooked heroes like Father Musiał, complex interreligious dialogue will remain unattainable.

Father Musiał's engagement in interreligious dialogue between Jews and Catholics in the 1980s and 1990s during the controversies of the Carmelite Convent, "Papal Cross," and the "War of the Crosses" at Auschwitz, are examples of extraordinary circumstances. Despite criticism from his Catholic peers and superiors, many who knew him agree that his life was a powerful witness to his faith. Before delving into Father Musiał's life and the work that he accomplished with Jewish-Catholic relations prior to his death in 2004, it is important to provide brief background information about Jews in

¹ Doris Donnelly, "On Relationship as a Key to Interreligious Dialogue," in *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, ed. Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 135.

Poland. It is also important to inform the reader that many were/are anti-Semitic in Poland, not all Polish people were/are anti-Semities. This paper has three chapters.

The first chapter provides a brief historical overview of Jews in Poland before, during, and after World War II. It argues that the portrayal of Jews changed radically in the thousand years that lapsed from their initial arrival in Poland in the tenth century to the time of the Holocaust. Once recognized for their skills as merchants and handlers of money, Jews had been reduced to prejudicial stereotypes one thousand years later. Father Musiał was exposed to the stereotypes. This background indicates the atmosphere against which Father Musiał had to live out his faith, creating acts of tolerance and compassion where increasing hostilities grew out of stereotypes.

The second chapter isolates three Jewish-Catholic controversies that Father Musiał faced: The Carmelite Convent Controversy, the “Papal Cross,” and the “War of the Crosses.” Father Musiał was asked by Cardinal Franciszek Macharski to become involved in the Carmelite Controversy, where respect for the Jewish dead at Auschwitz, thanks to his negotiating skills, triumphed. In the other two controversies, Father Musiał was brave enough to denounce the aggression of Catholic groups who did not want to give up respect for their dead in Auschwitz and their Catholic identity, without a fight.

Finally, the third chapter explores the life and legacy of Father Stanisław Musiał, S.J., as providing the cornerstone of his ability to surpass the cultural misunderstandings of his time. As discussed by his colleagues at *Tygodnik Powszechny* (General Weekly), Father Musiał’s early childhood experiences indicate that he was brought up in a pious household. His Jesuit education indicates training in patience, humility, and obedience. This formation for Father Musiał emphasized discipline, which fostered his

endurance — something he needed as 1) negotiations lagged for almost a decade with the Carmelite Convent Controversy, 2) other controversies arose during and after this controversy, 3) he faced criticism and persecutions after writing a necessary but provocative article on anti-Semitism entitled *Czarne Jest Czarne* (Black is Black), and 4) his isolation from people and decline in health. Even though he passed away unexpectedly in 2004, his legacy lives on especially through articles that he wrote and that were written about him, conferences organized in his memory, and an award named in his honor.

Methodology and Importance

For the first and second chapters, the research materials, including books and articles, came from various scholars whose areas of research include: Jewish culture in Poland, anti-Semitism, pogroms, the Holocaust, the controversies involving the Carmelite Convent, the “Papal Cross,” and the “War of the Crosses.” The research materials for sections of the second chapter and most of the third chapter, including books, letters, interviews, articles, and emails, are written in the Polish language and have been translated by the researcher. As most of the primary sources regarding the life and legacy of Father Musiał are only available in the Polish language, their inclusion and translation is critical to this work.

Father Musiał’s unique and remarkable story deserves to be told because people need to hear about this man who befriended Jews, educated himself about their culture, and became a respected, mediating voice for them when they needed help. People need to

learn about this man, who stood up for what was right despite being told he was wrong for doing so, who had a profound love and obedience to God and the Church, and who showed this love by putting others and their suffering before himself and his own suffering. Everyone should know the name of this man whose life was truly a witness to his faith.

CHAPTER I. PAST CALAMITIES

It is no secret that tensions have existed between Jews and Christians from the earliest days of Christianity. These tensions continued for centuries and carried over onto the European continent in the second century. Jews originally arrived in Poland because it was the most tolerant country towards them. Poland had a reputation as “*paradisus Iudaeorum*” (Paradise for Jews).² However, this chapter will argue that Poland’s reputation as “*paradisus Iudaeorum*” proved to be a fallacy, as Jews had to abide with insurmountable stereotypes that led to random acts of violence and even murder. This information is critical for understanding the experiences of Jews in Poland long before Father Stanisław Musiał, S.J., was born in 1938, and also why such issues were still operative during his lifetime.

Before understanding the background of the controversies that Father Musiał mediated, an understanding of the exact nature of the anti-Semitism that existed in Poland needs to be explored, also keeping in mind that not all Poles were anti-Semitic. Father Musiał himself began his own studies in a moment of conversion when he realized how serious the problem of anti-Semitism was in Europe, and especially in Poland. He discovered that certain types of anti-Semitism arose from the interpretation of New Testament passages, easily spread among Polish Catholics, who treated their Catholic faith as their identity and never questioned Church’s teaching. Further, this identity

² George Sanford and Adriana Gozdecka-Sanford, *Historical Dictionary of Poland*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2003), 79.

fostered the eventual aggressive placement of 322 crosses in 1998, on the grounds of Auschwitz by misled Catholics, as part of a campaign for Poland to return to being a Catholic nation. Finally, an exploration of Jewish stereotypes allows readers to educate themselves and others against these prevalent perceptions.

A. How the Jews Came to Poland

While scholars have not yet confirmed the exact year when Jews first arrived in Poland, there are many narratives explaining their arrival. One narrative claims that the first Jewish person or people in Poland arrived in the tenth century when a Sephardic Jew, Ibrahim Ibn-Jakub, accompanied the Spanish embassy from Cordoba to Central Europe.³ Ibrahim described and documented “*Polanie*,” a kingdom under the rule of Mieszko I. This kingdom eventually became known as Poland. Mieszko I, by marrying the Christian Czech princess Dubravka, established Christianity as the religion of Poland.⁴

Another narrative claims that there was a debate among the Poles in the city of Gniezno as to who should be the next to rule Poland after the death of their prince.⁵ The solution was to crown the next man who entered the town as prince. The man who entered was Abraham Prochownik, a Jewish man. However, he persuaded the Poles to

³ Ronald E. Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism: Poland 1933-1939* (Chur: Harwood Academic, 1994), 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973), 17.

make one of their own the next prince.⁶ A third narrative claims that the Polish Jews were descended from the Khazars, a tribe whose king, Bulan, and his nobles, had adopted Judaism as the state religion in about the late eighth through the early ninth centuries.⁷ The Khazars were powerful, they lived in the lower Volga region and established a state that lasted from the eighth through the tenth centuries.⁸

Narratives aside, what we can determine from history is that as early as the ninth century, Jewish merchants traveled in the area known as the kingdom of the Polanie. The first Jewish large-scale immigration occurred in the late eleventh century when Jews fled Prague in order to escape persecution.⁹ They settled in Silesia — what is now western Poland.¹⁰ Additionally, in the mid-thirteenth century, Jews who had been living in Russia before the invasion of the Tartars fled from the invaded areas into Poland as refugees. The Jewish people from these two migrations became the foundation for the Jewish community in Poland.¹¹

There was potential for economic development in Poland, and the Jews recognized the potential and were capable of putting their skills as merchants and handlers of money to use to further this development. They began as a “complementary population,” supplying the skills they had that were weak or absent in Poland.¹² With

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Leo Cooper, *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle: The Poles, the Holocaust, and Beyond* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), 10.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Modras, *The Catholic Church*, 3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Cooper, *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle*, 10.

¹² Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars*

time, the Jews became a rising urban middle class, and the Church was the first to react negatively to the growing prominence of the Jewish community. The Church reacted because there was concern that the presence of a prosperous Jewish population would prevent Christianity from taking root.¹³ Once Polish merchants arose in status, opposition to the Jews began. This is when the Jews moved from a complementary population to competitive population.¹⁴

By the mid-thirteenth century there was enough concern for the safety and well-being of the Jews for Prince Bolesław the Pious to declare the Statute of Kalisz. The statute gave the Jews entitlement to legal provisions, exempting them from German law.¹⁵ It also put no restrictions on the amount of property Jews could acquire and no limits on their choices of occupation. Travel, inheritance, and business transactions such as money-lending were guaranteed to them. Some Jews were also given the status of *servi camerae*, or “tax-payers to the crown” and answered only to the king or his deputy; they were provided protection of their lives and property.¹⁶

Because conflicts began to occur between the Jewish community and Jewish tax-collectors, the Jews were permitted to elect their own leaders. The *kahal* were a group of

(New York, Columbia University Press, 1977), 15.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, 16.

¹⁵ Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1986), 3.

¹⁶ Isaac Lewin, *The Jewish Community in Poland: Historical Essays* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 38-53.

Jewish elders who were designated to govern the affairs of their local community.¹⁷ They were entrusted with certain responsibilities such as the administration of synagogues, schools, and cemeteries; making sure that meat was properly kosher; and settling disputes.¹⁸ Because of the variety of skills that they had acquired, such as the development of various crafts and both local and long-distance trading, the Jews were considered to be an asset to the Polish kings and *szlachta*, or “nobility.” Wealthy Jews leased the royal mint, salt mines, and collected customs and tolls.¹⁹ However, even though they were considered an asset and lived their lives peacefully in Poland, this peace did not last long.

Although Jews had the support of the kings and *szlachta*, they did not have the same support from the Catholic authorities in Poland, who influenced the majority Catholic population of the time. Also in the mid-thirteenth century, the Council of Wrocław declared that the Jews were to live apart from the Christians in separate sections of the city or village, and were required to wear clothing that would make them easily identifiable.²⁰ The Council declared these separations to be necessary because they viewed Poland as becoming a new homestead on Christian soil and Jews would contaminate the purity of that claim.

¹⁷ Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism*, 5.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, 5-6.

²⁰ Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction*, 20.

B. The Most Common Anti-Semitic Stereotypes

The Catholic attitude toward Jews was a mix of toleration and contempt. Jews were allowed to practice their religion but it was considered inferior to Christianity.²¹ Certain anti-Semitic stereotypes had long been associated with Jews. Some common stereotypes depicted Jews as Christ-killers, child-killers, host desecrators, Freemasons, Communists, and con-artists. These stereotypes, particularly of Jews as Christ-killers, were used as justification for using Jews as scapegoats whenever problems arose. Even though the actions done to the Jews by the Catholics were considered to be anti-Semitic, the term anti-Semitism was not officially connected with the hatred of cultural and religious Jews until 1879 when Wilhelm Marr, a German publicist who wrote pamphlets, coined the term.²² Marr did this to make “Jewhatred” (*Judenhass*) sound more respectable and scientific.²³

1. Jews as Christ-killers

The stereotype that promoted Jews as Christ-killers is rooted in a passage in the Gospel According to Matthew:²⁴

²¹ Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism*, 8.

²² Stanisław Musiał, S.J., “The Holocaust, Christianity, Poland: Some Reflections of a Polish Christian Fifty Years Later” (Presentation for The Ecumenical Chair in Theology Lecture at Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, November 9, 1995), 7.

²³ See Moshe Zimmerman, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Anti-Semitism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)

²⁴ Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer, *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present* (New York and Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 75.

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood;' Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.²⁵

The Gospel passage states the reasoning for Jesus' death at the hands of the Jews — that Jesus blasphemed in proclaiming himself the Son of God. The verse that demonstrates this is found in the Gospel According to John, "The Jews answered him, we have a law and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."²⁶

John Chrysostom (340s-407) an early Church Father, took the passage from the Gospel According to Matthew and used it as the focal point of his theology of Jews and Judaism. He stated that "This supreme crime lies at the root of their woe and degradation" for which "no expiation [is] possible, no indulgence, no pardon."²⁷

As a priest in Antioch, Chrysostom noticed that Christians were continuing to attend Jewish services and practice Jewish rituals. He wanted to prevent Christians from converting to Judaism. In order to effectively do this, he needed to portray Jews as evil. He used pathological metaphors, dehumanization, and demonization for this purpose. He incorporated these elements into eight homilies that were delivered specifically around Jewish holidays. He was the first to apply the word Christ-killers to "all Jews at all times and in all places."²⁸ In the past, young Polish Catholic children, living in cities where there was a high population of Jews, would throw stones and mud at the Jewish men and

²⁵ Mt. 27:24-26 NRSV.

²⁶ Jn. 19:7 NRSV.

²⁷ Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths: A Historical and Contemporary Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 6.

²⁸ Ibid.

pull their beard. The justification for this was that they were avenging Jews for their role in the death of Jesus Christ.²⁹

2. Jews as Child-killers

The stereotype that promoted Jews as child-killers is also known as the blood libel myth, which refers to the Jews' alleged ritual murder of Christians — children in particular — for their blood to use in making matzoh.³⁰ Christians came to believe erroneously, that blood was necessary for healing, purification, and magic rites of the Jews. The first blood libel murder accusation against the Jews occurred in Poland in the mid-fourteenth century, and caused one of the first pogroms in Poland.³¹ In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the town of Sandomierz had the most instances of ritual murder accusations in Poland.

In Sandomierz, the first blood libel murder accusation occurred in 1698. The body of a little girl was found with bite marks, and her mother claimed that she had died of an illness and had kept her body because she could not afford to give her daughter a proper burial. However, rumors began circulating that Jews had murdered the little girl.³² Unfortunately, the circulation of such rumors was possible because no one paid attention to the fact that there was a lack of evidence to support such an accusation.

²⁹ Stanisław Musiał, “Pomóżcie Nam Być Lepszymi” in *Czarne Jest Czarne*, trans. Mine (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2003), 124.

³⁰ Perry and Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths*, 11.

³¹ Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland*, 26-27.

³² Stanisław Musiał, “Droga Krzyżowa Żydów Sandomierskich,” in *Czarne Jest Czarne*, trans. Mine (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2003), 31.

The second blood libel murder accusation occurred in 1710 when the body of a young boy was found on the property of Rabbi Jakub Herc in Sandomierz. The young boy was identified as an orphan who wandered around the vicinity in search of food. Nine Jews, including Rabbi Herc and his thirteen year old son Abraham, were put on trial and were forced to undergo torture until they “confessed.” Abraham was eventually released into the care of a local priest. He was baptized and given the name Michael and was coerced into providing the necessary evidence to prove that the orphaned boy was the victim of a ritual murder by his father and local Jews.³³

A century later in 1818, a painting depicting the blood libel murder of Christian children by Jews in Sandomierz was hung in the Sandomierz Cathedral and St. Paul’s Church.³⁴ In 2000, Father Musiał spoke out against this painting saying that he thought that there should be a museum in Sandomierz educating people about anti-Semitism, and that the painting should be placed in such a museum — the empty space in the cathedral where the painting would have hung would become a memorial for the Jews of Sandomierz who died as a result of the blood libel accusations.³⁵ Unfortunately, the paintings still hang in the Sandomierz Cathedral and St. Paul’s Church.

The punishment for those accused of blood libel was to be burned at the stake. Some medieval popes, such as Innocent IV, condemned the allegations of these ritual murders by stating that, in the Old Testament, Jews were instructed not to use any kind of

³³ Ibid, 36.

³⁴ Ibid, 30.

³⁵ Ibid, 42.

blood, let alone human blood. However, the Christians at the time did not listen to what Pope Innocent IV had to say on the matter.³⁶

3. Jews as Desecrators of the Host

Host desecration was another myth associated with the blood libel myth. This myth started as early as the mid-thirteenth century and held that Jews stole and desecrated the consecrated hosts of the Eucharist.³⁷ The plot of such stories usually consisted of Jews' hiring someone to hide in a church who would then steal consecrated hosts with the intention of desecration and magic rites. Acts of desecration of the consecrated hosts included stepping on the hosts, poking them with nails, burning them, and burying them. In some versions of the myth, while the desecration was taking place, Christians believed that miracles occurred that prevented the hosts from being harmed. The purpose of these myths of blood libel and host desecration was to make a logically moral argument that Jews were wicked and used magic, but that Christianity was more powerful and effective.³⁸ The punishment for host desecration was also being burned at the stake.

Heller notes that towards the end of the fourteenth century in Poznań, Poland, a rumor was spread that a Polish woman was bribed by Jews to steal three hosts, which then bled when stabbed by the Jews. This rumor prompted the Archbishop of Poznań to

³⁶ Perry and Schweitzer, *Anti-Semitic Myths*, 11.

³⁷ Ibid, 20.

³⁸ Po-chia R. Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 53.

send to trial an innocent rabbi, as well as thirteen innocent elders, who were all found guilty and burned alive.³⁹

4. Jews as Freemasons and Communists

The stereotype that depicted Jews as being Freemasons originated in England towards the mid-eighteenth century. The Freemasons were Deists who believed in God, the immortality of the soul, and the acceptance of a sacred law such as the Bible.⁴⁰ Many Jews found Freemasonry appealing because of the opportunity it offered them to enter into elite social circles.⁴¹ In the mid-eighteenth century, the first Jewish member was admitted into a Masonic lodge in London.⁴² As more Jews began to join the Masonic lodges, suspicions increased and allegations arose. According to E.N. Chabauty, a French village priest, Jews were portrayed as grand masters of Masonry and both the Masons and the Jews were suspected of being agents of the devil. Chabauty also claimed that the Jews controlled the Masons and, through Freemasonry, were trying to take over the world.⁴³

In the late nineteenth century, the secret police of Russian Tsar Nicholas II forged the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This document was used to accuse the Jewish people of pursuing world domination. As evidence of this conspiracy, the document falsely reported a meeting of Jewish elders in an old Jewish cemetery in Prague, where in

³⁹ Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction*, 16.

⁴⁰ Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism*, 46.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, 53.

⁴³ Ibid, 54.

such eerie surroundings they plotted to take over the world.⁴⁴ *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was first published in the early twentieth century with the approval of the Tsar, and even though it was proven a forgery in the mid-twentieth century by Philip Graves, it remains a staple of anti-Semitism throughout the world.⁴⁵ On October 4, 1929, Pope Pius XI issued a statement regarding Freemasons to a group of Polish pilgrims visiting the Vatican: he said, “Be watchful and pray. Be watchful, for dangers and insidious traps are threatening you. The enemy of all good is working in your midst. Here above all I have in mind the Masonic sect, which is spreading its perverse and destructive principles even in Poland.”⁴⁶

Thanks to the aforementioned *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Jews became notorious for allegedly wanting to take over the world and a new myth became common: “[A]lthough all communists are not Jews, still *all* Jews are communists.”⁴⁷ Jews were thought to have introduced Communism, a dangerous weapon, into Poland.⁴⁸ Since communists advocated the opposition of religion, they were seen as a threat to the Catholic Church.⁴⁹ In Poland, this phenomenon became known as *Żydokomuna* (Judeo-Communism).

⁴⁴ Perry, *Antisemitic Myths*, 139.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism*, 45.

⁴⁷ Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews, War, and Communism* (New York: KTAV, 1972), 1:462.

⁴⁸ Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006), 59.

⁴⁹ Cooper, *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle*, 104.

5. Jews as Con-Artists

The final stereotype, of Jews as con-artists, arose when the economy in Poland declined in the sixteenth century while the Jews continued to prosper in business and finance. What the Poles of this era failed to realize was that the true source of prosperity for Jews was that they were highly educated and knew how to run businesses effectively, which caused Polish artisans to feel threatened. A proverb used against Jews was “*U Żyda Taniej*,” or “Jews sell cheaper.” They were accused of using dishonest scales and false advertising. Many Poles believed that Jews would trick customers by lowering prices, but then would try to get customers to buy other merchandise at much higher prices. These same Poles also believed that Jews sold merchandise that was of poor quality.⁵⁰ These misconceptions and stereotypes persist to this day.

A boycott of Jewish businesses began in the 1930s. Two Polish periodicals in particular promoted this boycott: *Mały Dziennik* (Small Journal),⁵¹ and *Przewodnik Katolicki* (Catholic Guide).⁵² A re-occurring theme that appeared in these periodicals was that Jews were the enemy who were plotting to take over the Polish economy. The boycott occurred because the majority of the Poles wanted to nationalize the economy of Poland. Because Catholicism was the political ally of nationalization, the Catholic press and church leaders had no difficulties encouraging this boycott. They saw it as an obligation to the church and state,⁵³ terms they considered synonymous.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 232-3.

⁵¹ Ibid, 226.

⁵² Ibid, 228.

⁵³ Ibid.

C. Anti-Semitism and the Press

The widespread development of print in the mid-eighteenth century triggered the rise in anti-Jewish literature. Polish clerics began writing their own anti-Jewish tracts in Polish. Among these priests were two notorious and influential pamphlet writers, Sebastian Miczyński and Przecław Mojecki, who accused the Jews of murder, cruelty, and exploitation.⁵⁴ Miczyński, in his pamphlet entitled *Zwierciadło Korony Polskiej* (Mirror of the Polish Crown), contributed a great amount of folkloristic accusations against the Jews involving issues such as blood libel and host desecration.⁵⁵ Jews were also held responsible for running the prostitution business. Associating Jewish men with prostitutes was a common libelous accusation.⁵⁶ In a related perception, Jews were also linked with the “explosion” of pornography in Warsaw and other major Polish cities.⁵⁷ With these perceptions circulating, it is no wonder that the Jews were treated with animosity.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, Roman Dmowski, who was known as the founder of Nationalist anti-Semitism, organized the movement known as *Endecja* (National Democracy). He maintained that Poland should be a unitary national state in which all minorities were either Polonized or forced to emigrate. His movement’s philosophy stated that the state should be the exclusive

⁵⁴ Ibid, 13.

⁵⁵ Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 96.

⁵⁶ Robert Blobaum, *Anti-Semitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 86.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 87.

property of Polish Catholics and Poland was to be a Catholic nation.⁵⁸ His opponent, Marshal Józef Piłsudski, who was not anti-Semitic, maintained that Poland should be as it had been in the past, a pluralist federation of peoples led by the Polish majority. His movement was called *Sanacja* (Sanitation).⁵⁹

Poland had a history of being partitioned three times from the late eighteenth through nineteenth centuries by the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian empires.⁶⁰ Once Poland regained its independence in the early twentieth century and was no longer partitioned among these three empires, it emerged as an independent state. After this happened, there was an unbroken record of persecutions and murder of the Jews.⁶¹ New and difficult problems arose for the Jewish community, and anti-Semitism became a common part of everyday life.⁶² Because of these problems, many Jews decided to try assimilating themselves to the Polish language and culture; some even adopted Catholicism as their faith because a true Pole was defined as being Catholic. However, there were also Jews who were opposed to assimilation.

It was during this time period that additional periodicals became associated with anti-Semitism in Poland including *Głos* (The Voice) and *Rola* (The Land). One of the founders of *Głos*, Jan Ludwik Popławski issued statements on the assimilation of Jews in Poland. He was doubtful of the assimilation of Jews into Polish culture due to religious

⁵⁸ Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*, 57.

⁵⁹ Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism*, 23.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 17.

⁶¹ Cooper, *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle*, 45.

⁶² Ibid, 34.

and anthropological differences. He stated that “any form of assimilation of Jews, even switching their religion, would be harmful for Poles.”⁶³

It is difficult to establish how many Jews in Poland sympathized with or were opposed to assimilation.⁶⁴ There was, however, hostility toward the Jews when they were perceived as equal in intelligence to intellectual Poles. The Poles began to speak about the “Jewification” of Polish culture.⁶⁵ Since the national religion of Poland was Catholicism, Jews were seen as breaking with national identity; many Poles did everything they could to constantly reinforce this message to the Jews.

The Catholic press was one of the most important ways for the church leaders to influence and inform the faithful. There were at least 131 Catholic periodicals in 1927, and ten years later the numbers had reached about 228. Most of them were published either weekly or monthly, printing on the average of five to ten thousand copies per issue.⁶⁶ The most popular periodical was *Rycerz Niepokalane* (Knight of the Immaculata), a newspaper started by Father Maximilian Kolbe who also founded one of the largest publishing houses in Poland. In general, the Catholic periodicals were published by male religious orders. The Jesuits alone published eleven periodicals that

⁶³ Alina Cala and *Przegląd Powszechny*, “Krotka Historia Antysemityzmu w Polsce” *Wiara I Społeczeństwo/ Religia* {2009}: 1-5, accessed March 16, 2013, <http://www.deon.pl/religia/wiara-i-spoleczenstwo/art,26,krotka-historia-antysemityzmu-w-polsce.html>.

⁶⁴ Joseph Lichten, “Notes on the Assimilation and Acculturation of Jews in Poland, 1863-1943,” in *The Jews in Poland*, ed. Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky, 106-29 (Oxford, New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 121.

⁶⁵ Cooper, *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle*, 37.

⁶⁶ Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism*, 39.

ranged from current events and theological issues to contemporary issues for a mass audience.⁶⁷ Not all of these were anti-Semitic, of course, but some were.

Theater, radio, and motion pictures were other ways in which anti-Semitic propaganda was spread. According to one publication, “Polish culture, art, literature, the press, theatre and film were all under the influence of the Jews. Poles considered this a threat and decided they must ‘wage war without delay’.”⁶⁸ Anything remotely Jewish was banned from the Polish media. This propaganda had a profound effect on the way Polish Jews were treated by their Polish Catholic neighbors.

The presence of Jews in Poland stirred anti-Semitism to the point where violent attacks took place. The issue of violent attacks on Jews was even brought to the attention of the Vatican. The Vatican sent Monsignor Achille Ratti, who later became Pope Pius XI, to Poland to investigate what was happening to the Jews in Poland. He wrote a report about his observations, *The Jews and the Jewish Question in Poland*, but failed to acknowledge the severity of the situations that were taking place, such as periodic massacres of Jews. He was not concerned with these violent attacks. He also overlooked the words of a prominent anti-Semitic cleric in Poland, Fr. Józef Kruszyński, who, like many of his fellow priests, believed in the Jewish world domination conspiracy. Fr. Kruszyński explained that if the world was to be rid of Jewish influence, their extermination would be necessary.⁶⁹ The fact that such actions were overlooked, even by

⁶⁷ Ibid, 40.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 253.

⁶⁹ David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 256-7.

a representative of the Vatican, indicated that there was a failure on the part of the Vatican to address anti-Semitic ideas among its clergy.

In the mid-twentieth century, the Church blamed the spread of liberalism throughout Europe, particularly in Poland, on Jews and Freemasons by saying it was part of their plan for world domination.⁷⁰ Such liberal ideas included approval of civil marriages, civil divorces, feminism, gender equality, the use of birth control, and switching one's religion or not even having one.⁷¹ More than ever before, Polish people wanted the emigration of the Jewish people so that Poland could thrive as a Catholic nation. They tried to come up with strategic ways to make this happen.

D. Anti-Semitism During The Second World War

Anti-Semitism transitioned from words to actions following the invasion of the Nazis in Poland in 1939. Jews were killed or moved to ghettos by the Nazis without opposition from their Polish Catholic neighbors. Anti-Semitism was so embedded into Polish culture that mobs of Polish people laughed and looked on with indifference at what was happening to their Jewish neighbors.⁷² Many Poles went so far as to actively assist German soldiers who went in search of homes and shops to raid and plunder. Polish Catholics advised them where the wealthy Jews lived, as the Germans were not familiar with the neighborhoods.⁷³ These informants became known as the *Schmalzowniks*

⁷⁰ Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism*, 258.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Emanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War* (New York: Fertig, 1976), 8.

⁷³ Ibid, 42.

(Polish bounty hunters). They became allies of the Germans and hunted down Jewish people.⁷⁴ These Schmalzowniks also guarded the Jews in labor camps. Jews were tortured and even killed if they did not have enough money to bribe the informants.

In German concentration camps anti-Semitism turned to genocide. The camps were located all over Europe, including several notable ones in Poland:

Auschwitz/Auschwitz Birkenau, Chełmno, Sobibór, Bełżec, Majdanek, and Treblinka.

The most notorious camp was Auschwitz/Auschwitz-Birkenau, and it was this camp that became particularly symbolic for the international Jewish community.⁷⁵ Three million Jews perished in the concentration camps in Poland.⁷⁶ Even though non-Jewish Poles were also victims in the concentration camps, there was a failure on the part of Gentile Poles to reflect on the differences between their experiences and the experiences of the Polish Jews.⁷⁷

Jedwabne

Another aspect of European anti-Semitism included pogroms — mob attacks that often ended with murder were common during World War II. Many Poles participated in these pogroms and attacked Jewish people. One incident, similar to Kristallnacht, occurred in February of 1940, when groups of Polish anti-Semites, with the support of the Germans, armed themselves with improvised weaponry and recited phrases such as, “Kill

⁷⁴ Ibid, 42-43.

⁷⁵ Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz* (New York: Braziller, 1991), 13.

⁷⁶ “The Holocaust: An Introductory History” Jewish Virtual Library, accessed March 16, 2013, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/history.html>

⁷⁷ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 18.

the Jews,” “Down with the Jews,” and “Long live independent Poland without the Jews.” These gangs broke shop windows identified with the Star of David, burst open iron shutters, and broke into the shops to take whatever they could. They attacked Jews who crossed their path. This pogrom lasted several days.⁷⁸

A second pogrom, involving brutal anti-Semitic violence on the part of Catholic Poles outside of the concentration camps, was the massacre in Jedwabne which occurred in July 1942. Before the war, there were 1,600 Jews living in Jedwabne. Only seven of them survived the Jedwabne massacre because they were saved by a Polish woman. The killings began on June 25, 1942, started by two Polish brothers, along with several more men who were in the vicinity. They began to beat and torture the Jewish people, while the brothers played music to cover the screams of the victims.⁷⁹ Then on July 10, 1942, the Germans ordered that all of the Jewish people in the town were to be killed. Some local instigators armed with axes, studded clubs, and other instruments of torture chased Jewish people into the street.

Seventy-five of the youngest and healthiest Jews were selected and forced to carry a statue of Lenin while singing until they reached the town square. At the town square, they were ordered to dig a hole and to throw the monument into the hole. Then some were brutally beaten to death and thrown in the same hole. The other Jews that remained were forced to dig a hole and bury the dead Jews, and then they were killed and in turn

⁷⁸ Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, 51.

⁷⁹ Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Polish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2001), 16-19.

were buried by other Jews.⁸⁰ The beards of old Jews were burned; newborn babies were killed at their mothers' breasts; people were brutally beaten and forced to sing and dance. Then the remaining not-yet-killed Jews burned to death in a local barn. Afterwards their charred bodies were violated and checked for gold and valuables which were stolen.⁸¹ One thousand five hundred and ninety-three Jews lost their lives during this tragic pogrom, but it was just one of many brutal anti-Semitic actions perpetrated by Polish Catholics in collusion with the Nazi forces, on their Polish Jewish neighbors.

In 2001, Father Musiał wrote an article apologizing for the Jedwabne massacre. He thought that the Church should have done more to protect the Jews, stop the massacre from occurring, and offer an apology. This is what he wrote:

It seems to me what the case of Jedwabne, and the moral responsibility that Catholics have incurred towards Jews in history, can be fully stated on a half a page of a schoolchild's notebook. One can say simply: "This is the way we were. There is nothing we can say to justify it. We apologize to you and to God for all of this with all our hearts and all our souls. We want to change. We ask you: help us to be better." That's all. And a large number of penitential psalms.⁸²

Father Musiał was simply trying to point out to the clergy, that the Church, by not apologizing, had committed a sin and by not confessing to this sin publicly, forgiveness was unable to be obtained from the Jews.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 19.

⁸¹ Ibid, 19-20.

⁸² Stanisław Musiał S.J., "We Ask You to Help Us Be Better," in *The Neighbors Respond The Controversy Over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland*, ed. Joanna Michlic and Antony Polonsky, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 173-8.

E. Anti-Semitism after the Second World War

The Second World War devastated Jews in Poland. Before the war, there were an estimated three million Polish Jews, of whom only ten-percent survived. A small group of survivors formed the Central Committee of Polish Jews (CKŻP) to help the remnant of Polish Jewry.⁸³ The Jews were considered an “endangered species” in Poland after the war.⁸⁴ When Jewish survivors returned, they were not welcomed warmly by their Polish neighbors. “Time and again, when returning home to their own towns they were greeted with, ‘So’— followed by their first name, since they were on a first name basis with their Polish neighbors —‘you are still alive?’ They were given a hint to clear out or else they were threatened, sometimes even with murder.”⁸⁵

The reason for persecution of Jews by Poles after the war was the illicit transfer of property from Jewish ownership during the war. Polish society was affected by the Holocaust in a unique way because the mass killings of Polish Jews created a social vacuum that was promptly filled by the native Polish petty bourgeoisie.⁸⁶ Soon not only individuals, but also the Polish state administration were involved in the theft of Jewish property. “A series of rules, regulations, and decrees was published in 1945 temporarily placing abandoned [ownerless] and formerly German properties under the trusteeship of

⁸³ Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006), 31.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 34.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 36.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 39.

the state.”⁸⁷ The category of “abandoned” property applied primarily to “formerly Jewish” possessions.

Before the war, Jews made up one-third of Poland’s urban population, and since their religious communities had ceased to exist as legal entities, there were no heirs to the property designated under the law. The vast majority of Polish Jews had been killed. Therefore, property that formerly belonged to the Jews came under the control of local state administration.⁸⁸ It was difficult for Jews to resume their lives in Poland during this time period because they had lost their families, homes, possessions, and wealth.

Kielce

Pogroms also continued after the war. A pogrom in Kielce, in July 1946, began as a miscommunication between a child and his family. Henryk Błaszczyk, an eight-year-old boy, seemingly disappeared from home. He hitched a ride to his former village, wanting to see his friends. When he did not return home that evening, his parents reported him missing. Two days later, he returned. His father, Walenty Błaszczyk, intoxicated, returned to the police and informed the officer on duty that his son had been kidnapped by Jews, but he had managed to escape. He was sent away and told to come back the next morning to file a report.⁸⁹ The following morning, Walenty, Henryk, and a neighbor returned to the police. They walked by the Jewish Committee’s building where Henryk allegedly had been kidnapped and kept in the cellar. At his father’s demand, the

⁸⁷ Ibid, 47.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 47-48.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 83.

boy pointed to a small man in a green hat standing nearby. The boy claimed that this man was the person responsible for his kidnapping. The commander of the police precinct, Sergeant Zagórski, arrested the Jewish man, Kalman Singer, for questioning.⁹⁰

Singer was brought in and beaten. The head of the Jewish Committee in Kielce, Dr. Seweryn Kahane, also went to the police station worried that something unfortunate might happen if the arrested Jew was not freed. He pleaded for Singer's release and explained that there was a mistake, because the building had no cellar.⁹¹ Officers returned to the Jewish Committee building, as a crowd continued to grow. Once they established that the building had no cellar, Henryk Błaszczyk was scolded by a police officer for false accusations. The crowd, however, accused the officer of trying to cover up the crime.⁹² Eventually an army unit of over one hundred soldiers arrived in front of the Jewish Committee building. The crowd momentarily calmed down when they arrived.

At that point, some soldiers and policemen entered the building and collected weapons from the Jewish people.⁹³ The Jewish people were relieved once the army arrived, convinced that they were going to be rescued, but then the shooting began. The soldiers' weapons fired at the Jewish people, not at their assailants. The military did not have "official" orders to shoot and kill the Jews. In fact, no order authorizing the use of firearms was ever issued that day.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ibid, 83-84.

⁹¹ Ibid, 84.

⁹² Ibid, 85.

⁹³ Ibid, 86.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 87.

The chaos continued: shots were fired, Jews were thrown from windows, beaten, and eventually brought into the square where they were murdered.⁹⁵ Survivors were taken to a local hospital and were mistreated by the staff. According to the autopsy reports from the hospital describing the eleven women and twenty-six men killed during the pogrom, five men died from gunshot wounds while the rest of the victims had their skulls crushed by multiple blows.”⁹⁶ Unfortunately, neither government officials nor anyone from the Church intervened to prevent or stop this pogrom once it started.

The tragedy of the Kielce pogrom was that even though the war had ended, Polish Catholics were still directing senseless acts of hatred towards Polish Jews. Because the hatred failed to cease with the end of the war, many Jewish people who were able fled Poland for other countries such as the United States and the newly established Israel.

Summary

In summary, this first chapter presented a brief historical overview of Jews in Poland. It examined anti-Semitic stereotypes that resulted in persecution and violence, leading to mass murder in the Holocaust. This chapter proved that Poland did not turn out to be a “*paradisus Iudaeorum*” afterall.

Jews did not feel welcome in Poland after World War II; they were still treated with contempt by many Polish Catholics. No effective changes were made until the 1980s — during the controversies taking place on the grounds of Auschwitz. In the midst of these controversies, Father Stanisław Musiał, S.J., emerged as a respected, mediating

⁹⁵ Ibid, 88.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 92.

voice and leader in interreligious dialogue between Jews and Catholics. The second chapter will provide background information about the controversies that took place on the grounds of Auschwitz from the 1980s through the late 1990s.

CHAPTER II CONTROVERSIES REGARDING POLISH-JEWISH RELATIONS

The first chapter provided the foundation necessary for appreciating the significance of a crucial event relevant to interreligious dialogue between Jews and Catholics. This crucial event was the *Second Vatican Council* (1962-1965) and through the document *Nostra Aetate*, in which the Catholic Church formally apologized to the Jews. With this monumental step forward, relations began improving between Jews and Christians. Poland, however, struggled to adopt what was said in the edicts in *Nostra Aetate*, and certain controversies unfolded that almost prevented these improved relations between Christians and Jews from taking root.⁹⁷

According to the late prominent Jewish Theologian Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, “in a controversy, the instant we feel anger, we have already ceased striving for truth and have begun striving for ourselves.”⁹⁸ Anger was present in not one, but in all three controversies that took place on the grounds of Auschwitz. Both Jews and Catholics expressed anger over events that were unfolding in the midst of these controversies. The

⁹⁷ The Second Vatican Council was convoked by Pope John XXIII; he wanted to renew the life of the Church, to reform structures and institutions that needed updating, and to discover ways and means of promoting unity among all Christians. “Vatican Council II and the Church in the Modern World.” Catholic Education Resource Center, <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/history/world/wh0090.html>, accessed February 2, 2013, and Pope Paul VI. The Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*).

{October 28, 1965} Papal Archive. The Holy See, accessed on February 2, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

⁹⁸ Doris Donnelly and John Pawlikowski. "Lovingly Observant" *America* 196.21 {2007}: 11, accessed May 21, 2013, http://americamagazine.org/sites/default/files/issues/cf/pdfs/618_1.pdf

argument at center of this issue was entitlement of memory: who was more entitled to honor the memory of their dead, and in what way?

The Polish-Catholics felt that they were entitled to honor the memory of their dead with a convent and crosses, and used the deaths of two prominent Catholic saints — Father Maximilian Kolbe and Sister Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) — at Auschwitz as justification for doing so. The Jews wanted to honor the memory of their dead by not allowing the convent and crosses to remain on the grounds of Auschwitz. They feared that the Carmelite sisters would not only pray for expiation and for the souls of the dead, but also posthumously try to convert them.⁹⁹ The Jews argued that they did not honor their dead in this way and did not want others honoring their dead in this way either. They wanted Auschwitz to be a place where no religion should gain prominence.

Either way, it became an issue of two groups, each striving for their own ends, (especially in the case of Polish-Catholics) until they finally came together in an interreligious dialogue. It was thanks to Father Stanisław Musiał, S.J., as a respected, mediating voice, that this interreligious dialogue was initiated. Through meetings in Geneva, and various articles that he and others wrote, both groups, especially Polish-Catholics, were reminded to focus on the bigger picture of the truth, thus producing effective strategies for possible resolutions for each of these controversies.

This second chapter will discuss the origins of the Carmelite Convent established at Auschwitz in 1984, and how a series of controversies erupted through an insensitive fundraising campaign for the convent. The root of these controversies was a series of miscommunications and disputes that occurred between Jews and Catholics. If not for the

⁹⁹ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 7.

help of the Subcommittee for Dialogue with Judaism, especially Father Musiał, this controversy would have put an abrupt end to interreligious dialogue between Jews and Catholics in Poland. The chapter will conclude with information about the additional controversies of the “Papal Cross” in 1988, and “War of the Crosses” in 1998, on the grounds of Auschwitz, as well as the outcomes of these controversies.

A. Convent at Auschwitz

The Catholic Church in Poland was directly tied to the controversy behind the convent at Auschwitz. The Church moved to gain access to the site in order to prevent the government from using Auschwitz as Communist propaganda, which would not have been out of the ordinary, since there was already a convent on the grounds of the camp in Dachau. It made sense to some that there should be a convent in Auschwitz as well.¹⁰⁰

Father Kazimierz Górny, previously a pastor in the town of Auschwitz, decided that the Old Theatre building would be the perfect location for this convent. He had ridden his bike past the Old Theatre building daily, and had not taken much notice of it until one day, when inspiration hit; he decided that it would be the perfect place for a convent.¹⁰¹ In 1983, his idea moved closer to reality when Sister Zofia Jaśniak, Mother Superior of the Discalced Carmelites of Poznań, submitted a letter to the Office of Religious Affairs in Warsaw on January 12, 1983.

¹⁰⁰ “Catholic Convent at Dachau,” *Scrapbook Pages*, accessed March 22, 2013, <http://www.scrapbookpages.com/DachauScrapbook/MemorialSite/Convent.html>. Heilig Blut or “*Holy Blood*” is the name of the Carmelite monastery at Dachau which is located in southern Germany in the state of Bavaria. The monastery was built in 1963 and dedicated in 1964.

¹⁰¹ Stanisław Musiał S.J., Witold Bereś, and Krzysztof Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny: Rozmowy z Księdzem Stanisławem Musiałem*, trans. Mine (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2006), 89.

The letter read as follows:

On behalf of the Monastery of the Discalced Carmelite Sisters in Poznań, who have their residence by the street St. Wojciech 19, I politely request permission to set up a convent in Auschwitz. The motivation for our request is the following: A sister from our Order, Edith Stein, as well as our great countryman St. Father Maximilian Maria Kolbe, both died in the Auschwitz camp. We are very keen on using this very place to pray for peace on earth, so that never again would there be a repetition of such crimes and hatred for one person by another — besides this would be similar to the actions done for many years, by the Sisters of our Order in Dachau. The reasons listed above dictate that the convent proposed by us should have close ties to the former Auschwitz concentration camp. For us the most suitable objective would be the house found by the street Finder, neighboring the camps' Wall of Death. It was built by the Austrians for the intention of using it as a theatre (even though it never served this purpose) it became desolate over time, and is currently used as a storehouse for GS (District Cooperative). The blueprint of the house as well as the building itself, seem to be functional for the realization of our purpose, that is, a solely contemplative lifestyle. We kindly ask for a sympathetic response for our request.¹⁰²

Sister Zofia Jaśniak
(Mother Superior)

In addition, Sister Jaśniak also wrote to her provincial, Father Eugeniusz Jan Morawski. He fully supported the sisters and wrote letters on behalf of the Auschwitz convent proposal to various offices of Religious Affairs, including Warszawa and Bielsko-Biała.¹⁰³ Initially, the office in Bielsko-Biała rejected both requests because the building was still being used for storage by the town. Without an alternative space to use for storage, the convent plan could not proceed. Fr. Morawski also wrote to various people in positions of Church authority including Franciszek Cardinal Macharski of Kraków, whom he persuaded to help with this plan.

¹⁰² Peter K. Raina. *Spór o Klasztor Sióstr Karmelitanek Bosych w Oświęcimiu*, trans. Mine (Olsztyn: Warmińskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1991), 7-8.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 8.

Their requests were finally approved in January 1984, and they were given permission to use the Old Theatre building for the convent. In June 1984, the mayor of the city of Auschwitz officially declared the Old Theatre building as property of the Discalced Carmelite Sisters of Poznań. With a one-time payment, they were given a lifelong lease (ninety-nine years) with the option of renewal.¹⁰⁴

Despite its neglected condition, the Discalced Carmelite sisters moved into the building in September 1984. Because the exterior of the building was considered a historical landmark, they needed permission to proceed with the repairs necessary to accommodate fourteen sisters. An added challenge was that even after they received permission for interior repairs, they also needed financing to help with the restoration. With the permission of Cardinal Macharski, they sought the help of the charitable church organization *Kirche in Not* (Church in Need), located in Koenigstein, Germany, as this organization offered substantial help for churches throughout Eastern Europe.¹⁰⁵ *Kirche in Not* began an appeal to raise funds for the convent in May 1985, when Pope John Paul II took a pilgrimage in the Benelux countries. To attract the Pope's attention, a special issue of their bi-monthly publication, *Echo der Liebe* (Echo of Love), was dedicated entirely to the Pope's pilgrimage.

Father Werenfried van Straaten wrote an appeal in the publication, *A Convent in Auschwitz, a Gift to the Pope*:

Right before the outbreak of World War Two the public theatre in Auschwitz was finished being built. There were never any performances in the theatre, but it became an auditorium of drama for four million people who died there. The Nazis

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 24-25.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 29.

confiscated the theatre and made it a storehouse for gas, a tool of annihilation. This somber building is found near the “wall of death” and Block 11, where Maximilian Kolbe died as a martyr. Also there, Sister Benedicta of the Cross, Edith Stein, lost her temporal life, so that she could find eternal life. After long negotiations the former storehouse was given to the Discalced Carmelites. They were given permission to turn its interior into a convent. In this way, a place that once served the work of death, will now beam with new life. Eight Carmelite sisters already live in the cold and cramped rooms. Day and night they have in front of their eyes, the millions of deceased, they pray and do penance for us who are still living, and with their hands they build a sign of love, peace, and unity, that will be a testimony of the victorious strength of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Our work, which is a request of Cardinal Wyszyński, takes patronage for sixty contemplative monasteries in Poland, and desires to take care of everything that is lacking for the new convent in Auschwitz. After the visit of the Pope, we would like to give a gift from our benefactors in the Benelux countries, the necessary sum of money to finish the repairs of the *convent, which will serve as a spiritual fortress, and a guarantee of the conversion of our stray brothers from our countries as well as proof of our good will and desire to erase the outrages, so often done to the Vicar of Christ* [Italics mine] Would you like to join in donating? You can pass along your offering, by marking: “Convent as a Gift to the Pope.”¹⁰⁶

B. Controversies Begin

The *Kirche in Not* appeal aroused a great deal of criticism, particularly in Belgium and France. Jewish groups in these countries expressed concerns over the presence of the Catholic sisters on the grounds of a concentration camp that had acquired profound significance to Jews after the end of World War II. To ease their concerns, an article entitled “The Carmelite Convent in the Depository of Deathly Gas in Auschwitz” was published in the Brussels journal *Le Soir* (The Evening), by Michael Bailly on October 14, 1985.

Bailly wanted to assure Jews throughout Europe that this new convent was not a provocation, nor was it the intention of the Church to diminish the extreme sacrifice

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 29-30.

suffered by the Jews.¹⁰⁷ In his article, he also reiterated parts of the appeal. However, phrases such as “conversion of strayed brothers” and “the outrages so often done to the Vicar of Christ,” stirred the most protests in the Jewish community.¹⁰⁸ The Jewish people interpreted the reference to conversion as implying that the sisters would not only be praying for the conversions of Jewish people, but also posthumously converting the victims of the *Auschwitz-Birkenau* camps to Catholicism.¹⁰⁹

In an attempt to respond to these concerns, the justification that the Roman Catholic Church used for the presence of the Carmelites and the convent at Auschwitz were the deaths of Father Maximilian Kolbe and Sister Benedicta of the Cross in the concentration camp at Auschwitz. These references were problematic, however. Sister Benedicta of the Cross was born Edith Stein, a Jew, and converted to Christianity. She did not die because she was a martyr to her Catholic faith, but because of her Jewish ethnicity. Even though Father Kolbe died as a martyr, he was also the editor of an anti-Semitic paper published before the war.¹¹⁰ The Church perhaps could not have picked two worse examples to alleviate Jewish concerns regarding the convent, and, as a result, the Church’s response to the Jews’ concerns seemed insensitive.

Calls for protest by Jewish people quickly spread all over Europe and the United States. Many Jews considered the convent, and the sisters within it, as an insult to Judaism. The solution they proposed was to have the convent and the sisters permanently

¹⁰⁷ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 8.

removed because their presence implied that the Catholics were trying to de-Judaize the Holocaust.¹¹¹

In December 1985, the issue of the convent conflict reached Poland when Edgar Bronfman, President of the World Jewish Congress, came to Poland on a visit and discussed the issue with Adam Łopatka, the Minister of Religious Affairs. The Minister agreed that the government should get involved and negotiate with the Church officials in Poland for the removal of the convent from the grounds of the Auschwitz. Complicating matters, the Polish government later claimed that it could not reverse decisions that were made by Church officials.¹¹²

Father Musiał indirectly got involved on Christmas Eve of 1985. He met Bernard Suchecky, a Belgian Jewish journalist who was concerned about the Carmelite Convent on the grounds of Auschwitz. Staff members at Musiał's workplace, *Tygodnik Powszechny* (General Weekly), were unaware of what Suchecky was talking about. When Suchecky told him about what was occurring, and how Catholics were threatening the memory of Jewish victims at Auschwitz, Father Musiał was confused.¹¹³ Initially, he tried to reassure Suchecky that a convent was not significant. A convent would be better than a night club, and pointed out, that there was nothing wrong with Catholic prayers being said in Auschwitz. Musiał said that because he believed that Polish Catholics would be tolerant and respectful of Judaism, and therefore the Jewish people should be equally tolerant of Catholicism. However, the experience of Jews in Poland was far from

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid, 31.

¹¹³ Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 87.

tolerant and respectful. In fact, every time Suchecky left for Poland his mother was scared that he would be killed. She believed the Polish people were anti-Semitic and hated Jews.¹¹⁴

Suchecky had come to Poland on multiple occasions to investigate what was happening in Auschwitz, traveling widely to gather information and documenting everything he learned. In 1985, after the publication of his article about the Carmelite Convent on the grounds of Auschwitz, Jewish people all over the world became outraged at what they learned was going on, and Jewish delegations started to arrive in Poland to discuss the matter. Cardinal Macharski asked Father Musiał to become involved and to help resolve the tensions that were brewing. The Cardinal wanted Musiał to be at his disposal, particularly in matters of correspondence, because he knew English, French, German, and Italian. Father Musiał met the arriving Jewish delegations, answered questions from reporters, and responded to the letters of protest arriving from all over the world, especially from the United States.¹¹⁵

The first meeting with Church officials in Poland was arranged in February 1986 when representatives from the Belgian Jewish community met with Cardinal Macharski, whose diocese included Auschwitz. During this meeting, the Jewish leaders stated their reasons for opposing the presence of the Carmelite sisters in the camp. Having a convent on the grounds of Auschwitz after the Holocaust was insulting, they explained, because the camp had become a symbol of the Holocaust, and that symbolism was not to be

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 88.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 92-93.

compromised. The representatives also felt that the presence of the convent was in direct contrast to the Jewish and Christian dialogue that Vatican II had initiated.¹¹⁶

Even though the Cardinal was sympathetic to the arguments of the Belgian Jewish representatives, and recognized that the Jewish people were the main victims of the camp, he felt that “Auschwitz was a symbol of evil for all of humanity, for Poles and Jews alike.”¹¹⁷ The symbolism of Auschwitz was the root issue because the Jews and Catholics both had different interpretations of what Auschwitz represented.¹¹⁸ The Polish Catholics did not see a problem with the convent or with the prayers offered by the Carmelite sisters, because they did not regard Auschwitz as strictly a Jewish camp. Among the first prisoners to arrive in 1940 at Auschwitz I, the main camp, were Catholic Poles. It was not until 1942 that the first Jewish prisoners arrived at the camp, and Poles associated them with Auschwitz II-*Birkenau*. Auschwitz II-*Birkenau* was much larger than the main camp and contained facilities that made it function as a killing center, primarily for Jews.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 8.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 9. It is important to notice that the Cardinal treated Poles and Jews as mutually exclusive groups.

¹¹⁸ Marvin Prosono. "Symbolic Territoriality and the Holocaust: The Controversy Over The Carmelite Convent At Auschwitz, in *Perspectives on Social Problems*, Volume 5. Greenwich Conn: JAI Press, 1994, 173-193. An insightful observation about the issue of symbolism came from Marvin Prosono who suggested that this was a case of what he called ‘symbolic territoriality,’ it is the “human behavior which attempts to gain or maintain control of whole or parts of physical things for the purpose of controlling the symbols which are attached to those things; or which attempts to gain or maintain control of whole or parts of symbols (or their construction) often for the purpose of controlling the physical things to which symbols may become or are attached.”

¹¹⁹ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “Auschwitz.” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed February 2, 2013, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005189>

The representatives of the Jewish groups, however, viewed the convent as problematic because more Jewish people perished in Auschwitz than in any other concentration camp. For this reason, Auschwitz had become the preeminent symbol of the Holocaust for Jewish people throughout Europe.

In March 1986, Cardinal Macharski wrote an article for the liberal Polish publication, *Tygodnik Powszechny* (Catholic Weekly), explaining why he allowed the convent's establishment at Auschwitz. He emphasized the belief that Auschwitz II-*Birkenau* was a separate camp from the main camp Auschwitz I, and therefore Catholic Poles had the right to claim the camp because "Auschwitz is a synonym of martyrdom and extermination which affected the majority of non-Jewish families."¹²⁰ As for the Carmelite sisters, Macharski stated that they were to confine themselves to the convent and devote themselves to prayer. He expressed his appreciation for what the sisters were doing and pointed out that they decided of their own free will to stay at this tragic place. He also claimed that the convent was located outside the boundaries of the camp, and it had been chosen because it was close to Block 11 where many Polish Catholic victims, including Father Kolbe, died.¹²¹

The fact that Cardinal Macharski distinguished Auschwitz I from Auschwitz II-*Birkenau* was problematic for many Jews, as was his use of Christian terminology such as "charity, expiation of sins, penance, and martyrdom" because the terminology did not apply to Jews.¹²² There was also an investigation by B'nai B'rith (International Council

¹²⁰ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 32.

¹²¹ Ibid, 33.

¹²² Ibid, 34.

of the Anti-Defamation League), as to whether or not the Old Theatre building was outside the grounds of Auschwitz. Catholic Poles believed it was outside the grounds, but the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proved otherwise; it determined that the building was indeed on the grounds of the camp.¹²³

In April of 1986, various leading European rabbis wrote a letter to the Pope objecting the presence of the convent. To support their objection, they provided documentation showing that Jews had not been permitted to build a monument at Auschwitz. According to this document, permission had not been granted because there should be no references to specific religious faith at Auschwitz.¹²⁴ The European Jewish Congress passed a resolution the following month confirming that Jews considered the presence of the Carmelite sisters and convent to be offensive to Jews throughout the world.¹²⁵ They urged the Catholic Church and the Polish government to have the convent removed, as it jeopardized dialogue between Jews and Catholics. One member, Markus Pardes, further claimed that the only proper and respectful way to honor all of the victims at Auschwitz, regardless of faith, was to “maintain the site in total silence, the silence that was the silence of man and the silence of God.”¹²⁶ This controversy was so significant that it was not just Jews who protested the convent; Catholics from other countries protested its presence as well.

Cardinal Józef Glemp, the Primate of Poland, became involved in April 1986 when, while visiting France, he met with French Jewish representatives. Glemp claimed

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 35.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 36.

that the Jews were being irrational and that he did not understand why there was such a problem about the convent. He said, “it was necessary to recompense God for the horrific sin at the site of this extermination camp where the blood of innocent Russians, Poles, Dutchmen, Jews, and Austrians had flowed.”¹²⁷ He also accused Jews of attacks on the Catholic Church in Poland. Fortunately, not everyone agreed with Glemp, and many regarded his comments as inappropriate, as he did not consider the issue outside of a Polish-Catholic perspective.

C. Interreligious Dialogue Begins

Father Stanisław Musiał S.J., emerged as a mediating voice in the spring of 1986, when the 213th Conference of the Plenary Polish Episcopate formed the Subcommittee for Dialogue with Judaism. On May 13, 1986 this subcommittee renewed the Christian-Jewish dialogue after Pope John Paul II visited the Synagogue of Rome. He was the first Pope to ever visit a synagogue.¹²⁸ This crucial event demonstrated the level of serious consideration the Vatican took with regard to the Carmelite Convent Controversy at Auschwitz.

The goal of this subcommittee was to reshape Catholic attitudes towards Jews and Judaism, and to eliminate anti-Semitism. Liberal Polish Catholics such as Father Musiał were strong leaders for the establishment of this interreligious dialogue. Conservative

¹²⁷ Ibid, 37. It is upsetting that there are four nationalities and one ethnicity being represented. Jews were considered a separate “ethnicity” and were not considered by some to belong to a “nationality.”

¹²⁸ E.J. Dionne Jr. “Pope Speaks in Rome Synagogue, in the First Such Visit on Record,” The New York Times, accessed May 21, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/14/international/europe/14POPE.html>

Polish Catholics were skeptical about such a dialogue.¹²⁹ Before the committee was formed, Father Musiał spoke to the press on behalf of Cardinal Macharski, claiming that prayer never hurt anyone, that the building was not on the grounds of the camp, but rather adjacent to the grounds, and that the convent was not intended to offend anyone. This ultimately led to the Cardinal recommending that Father Musiał, Jerzy Turowicz, and Father Jerzy Chmiel be members of the subcommittee, as he considered their opinions to be neutral.¹³⁰

Cardinal Macharski met with the Jewish delegations and tried to explain his point of view, but did not change the delegates' minds. The delegates told Father Musiał that they would take care of the situation themselves and that if the situation continued, it would result in a scandal and the Catholics would not be victorious. They added that it was only a matter of time before the convent was removed entirely.¹³¹ The Church wanted to handle things on its own without government interference.

In July 1986, Cardinal Macharski made an unexpected trip to Israel by invitation of Teddy Kollek, Mayor of Jerusalem. Part of his agenda included a visit to Yad Vashem.¹³² While at Yad Vashem, he reflected on the controversy in Poland and realized that a dialogue was necessary for the Christians and Jews: Macharski decided that

¹²⁹ Joanna Michlic and Antony Polonsky, "Catholicism and the Jews in Post-Communist Poland," in *Jews, Catholics, and the Burden of History*, ed. Eli Lederhendler. (New York: Oxford Press, 2005), 41.

¹³⁰ Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 93.

¹³¹ Ibid, 94.

¹³² "Statistics-The Righteous Among the Nations" Yad Vashem, accessed June 28, 2013, <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/statistics.asp>

Yad Vashem is a memorial of the Holocaust located in Jerusalem, Israel. It is also interesting to note that currently there are over 6,000 Polish people that are recognized at Yad Vashem as "Righteous Among the Nations."

representatives of Polish Catholics and Jews would have to meet again in order to find an acceptable solution to what he had left behind at Auschwitz. His realization, along with suggestions from Cardinal Lustiger that both Jews and Polish Catholics should meet, resulted in the Geneva meetings.¹³³

D. Geneva Meetings

The first of several meetings took place on July 22, 1986, at the Rothschild palace on Lake Geneva in Geneva, Switzerland.¹³⁴ Geneva was chosen because it was neutral territory. Representing the Church were the aforementioned Jerzy Turowicz and Father Musiał, who helped organize the meeting, as well as four cardinals: Cardinal Franciszek Macharski of Kraków, Cardinal Albert Decourtray of Lyon, Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Malines-Brussels, and Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger of Paris. The Jewish representatives included Theo Klein (President of *Conseil Representatif des Juifs de France*), Rabbi Sirat (*Grand Rabbin*, France), Markus Pardes (President of the Committee that Coordinates Jewish Organizations in Belgium), Professor Ady Steg of *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, and Tullia Zevi (President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities).¹³⁵ This meeting primarily consisted of both the Jews and Catholics voicing their opinions about the convent controversy, but no consensus was reached, although the arguments of the Jews outweighed those of Polish Catholics.

¹³³ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 42.

¹³⁴ Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 96.

¹³⁵ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 44-45.

Five days before the second meeting, Father Musiał, was asked by Cardinal Macharski to visit Cardinal Lustiger in France with Church representatives from Poland. Both Catholic and Jewish representatives decided in France that the most effective solution would be to build an Interreligious Center where people of all religions could gather, with a new convent down the road. This solution, which both groups discussed in France, was proposed at the second meeting in Geneva.¹³⁶

Cardinal Decourtray and Theo Klein were in charge of the second meeting, which took place in February of 1987. The same delegates from the first meeting attended, with some additions, primarily on the Jewish side: Dr. E.L. Ehrlich (European Delegate of B'nai B'rith), Sam Hoffenberg (Delegate of B'nai B'rith at UNESCO), Dr. Gerhart M. Riegner (co-Chairman, World Jewish Congress Governing Board), and Professor Georges Schneck. The only addition to the Catholic side was Kazimierz Jan Górny (Auxiliary Bishop of Kraków). The group discussed the proposal and eventually reached a consensus — Polish Catholics would have to honor the memory of their dead elsewhere.¹³⁷ The convent was to be re-located and a new Interreligious Center would be built so that people of all faiths could have a place to come and pray. This was known as the Geneva Declaration, and was to be signed by all of the participants.

The Polish Catholics had to make a choice: either support the Carmelites or accept the Geneva Declaration and continue dialogue with Jews.¹³⁸ Even though the Polish Catholics were reluctant, they agreed to the compromise. Despite the agreement,

¹³⁶ Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 97-99.

¹³⁷ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 45.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Cardinal Macharski was skeptical and asked Father Musiał if he should sign. Father Musiał advised him to sign because it would satisfy both the Polish Catholics and Jews. Father Musiał saw the Geneva Declaration as building a greater understanding between the Polish Catholics and the Jews.¹³⁹

The Jewish representatives reacted positively to the Geneva Declaration, but Catholic Poles objected to UNESCO's determination that the Old Theatre Building/convent was located in the boundaries of the camp. Despite their objections, the Polish government reiterated that the convent would be relocated and a new Interreligious Center would be created.

The Polish Catholics eventually learned about the Geneva meeting through an article written in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, by Father Musiał, in March of 1987, in which he discussed the significance of Auschwitz for both Jews across the world and Polish Catholics. He wrote, "It can never be sufficiently emphasized that the fate of the Jews during the last war was incomparably worse than that of any other nation. Never before in the world's history had there been a crime of such evil."¹⁴⁰ Father Musiał also stressed that the new center would be beneficial for both Polish Catholics and Jews who wanted to pray at Auschwitz in their own ways, and that even though the convent was to be relocated, it would still be at Auschwitz, just not within the boundaries of the camp.

After the article was published, there was disagreement about these issues among Polish Catholics because of Father Musiał's opposition to the convent's presence on the grounds of Auschwitz, and his words of compassion fell on many deaf ears. To many

¹³⁹ Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 100.

¹⁴⁰ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 51.

Polish Catholics, the fact that he wrote this article made it seem as though he was turning his back on his people and on the Catholic Church.¹⁴¹ As for the plans proposed in the Geneva Declaration, Father Musiał was asked to find suitable plots of land for the new convent and the Interreligious Center.¹⁴²

On December 31, 1987, the Polish Minister for Religious Affairs, Władysław Loranc, wrote to Gerhart Riegner, Co-Chairman of the Governing Board of the World Jewish Congress, reporting the Polish government's positive attitude regarding the new center that was to be built.¹⁴³ He hoped that the plans would end the tension between the two groups. In April 1988, the meetings between the two groups continued. During a commemoration celebration of the forty-fifth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Minister Loranc suggested that three plots of land would be provided by the government for the relocation of the Carmelite convent. Church officials were interested in two of these plots and would make a final decision within three months' time.¹⁴⁴

As time went by, however, the Polish government did not take any action to begin the project. The government did not educate the people, especially those who were living in the town of Auschwitz, about the project. This was surprising to Jewish visitors who came to the camp in March 1988. One of the visitors talked with the Mother Superior of the convent, who said that she had not been informed of the decision regarding the fate of

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid, 102.

¹⁴³ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 48.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

the convent. The Jewish delegation left uneasy with the knowledge that Cardinal Macharski had not informed the sisters about these decisions.¹⁴⁵

Much to the surprise of the Jews, Cardinal Macharski later claimed that it would be impossible for the relocation to take place in the time frame agreed upon at the meeting in Geneva, due to certain regulations in Poland. The outcome was that the original deadline was not met, and as a result, the Jewish people doubted the center would even be built. It was disconcerting that after the Geneva meetings took place, and a declaration was signed, nothing was being done in order to put the peaceful solution into effect.

Despite being informed of the Geneva Declaration, the Carmelite sisters were reluctant to move, creating excuses in order to avoid moving. While Father Musiał was searching for the plots of land for the new convent, further provocation ensued and the “Papal Cross” was erected on the grounds of Auschwitz.

E. The “Papal Cross”

Soon after Cardinal Macharski’s claims, there were protests from both sides. The Jewish people wanted the convent and the sisters out of Auschwitz because it was part of the agreement in the Geneva Declaration. The Polish Catholics wanted the convent and the sisters to remain as a commemoration of the Polish Catholics who had died at Auschwitz. Then, in July 1988, Polish Catholic protestors erected a 23-foot high cross in front of the convent. It was known as the “Papal Cross,” because many claimed that it

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 62.

was the cross that had been used when Pope John Paul II had celebrated a Mass not far from Auschwitz during his first pilgrimage to Poland. This action outraged many Jews around the world, because, in addition to directly violating the Geneva Declaration, the cross minimized the significance of the murders of Jews at Auschwitz and focused solely on Polish Catholics. Both Jewish and non-Jewish groups began petitions to remove the cross and the sisters, but they were rejected. The residents of the town of Auschwitz also started their own petition and protested the decision to remove the cross and convent. Tensions increased.

In 1989, Fr. Anastazy Gegotek, as a representative of the Carmelite sisters, was interviewed. He called the whole incident a misunderstanding and said that most of the Jewish people who perished did so in Auschwitz II-*Birkenau*, and that Auschwitz was a place where people of many ethnicities died. He also said that the reaction of the Jewish people was painful, and he did not like the fact that they protested on the site.¹⁴⁶ He wanted the victims to be honored, but did not take into consideration that the Jewish people honor their deceased in a different manner, not with symbols such as a convent and a cross. Jews were not even given permission to have their own memorial at Auschwitz.

A Jewish representative, Raya Yaglom of the Women's International Zionist Organization, came to the site to protest accompanied by 300 other Jewish women. After meeting with Cardinal Macharski and the Minister for Religious Affairs, Yaglom

¹⁴⁶ Yossi Lempkowicz. "Carmelite Official Says Auschwitz Controversy a 'misunderstanding'." *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* {May 5, 1989} accessed March 16, 2013, <http://archive.jta.org/article/1989/05/05/2870257/carmelite-official-says-auschwitz-controversy-a-misunderstanding>

perceived a strong desire on the part of the Church, to “de-Judaize the Shoah and turn it into a Christian Holocaust.”¹⁴⁷ The word Holocaust is not considered adequate by some Jews because Jewish genocide was not an equivalent of a burnt offering to God but rather something far more outrageous. Therefore, only the word “Shoah” would express the intensity of what was occurring.¹⁴⁸

The “Papal Cross” at Auschwitz continued to be an immense issue for both groups. “In Poland, the cross is a symbol of faith. For these people to oppose the cross is synonymous with opposing the faith.”¹⁴⁹ For Jews, the cross at Auschwitz was a further insult to the Geneva Declaration, and thus the issue went unresolved. Father Musiał and Cardinal Macharski, who were visiting a Jewish family in Paris at the time, were initially unaware of the presence of the “Papal Cross” until their hosts informed them. Despite an effort by Polish Catholics to keep the Cross at Auschwitz, Father Musiał realized that the Church had been misguided regarding the significance Auschwitz had for Jews during the Shoah, and had not adequately recognized the Jews’ horrific experiences.¹⁵⁰

New sites for the convent and center were finally found in June 1989. Plots of land were found 550 yards away from the camp. These plots had approval from the government, but there were concerns on the part of the Jewish people that the project

¹⁴⁷ Hugh Orgel. "Head of WIZO Quotes Cardinal Saying He's Powerless on Nuns." *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* {June 8, 1989} accessed March 16, 2013, <http://archive.jta.org/article/1989/06/08/2870479/head-of-wizo-quotes-cardinal-saying-hes-powerless-on-nuns>

¹⁴⁸ Richard Evans. *In Hitler's Shadow*, (New York: Pantheon, 1989), 142.

¹⁴⁹ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 78.

¹⁵⁰ Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 106-11.

would not be finished in the timeframe agreed upon in Geneva. Still, it seemed the center would at last become reality.¹⁵¹

F. Geneva Declaration Suspended

In July 1989, a new controversy erupted when a group of seven Jewish protestors, under the direction of Rabbi Avraham Weiss of New York, arrived at the site of the convent and began to picket. They wore the striped uniforms that were common in the camps during World War II and attempted to meet with the sisters. After 15 minutes of knocking with no answer, they decided to climb the convent fence. Once they were on the grounds of the convent, they began to pray. They wore prayer shawls and blew rams horns. Construction workers shouted at them from the windows of the convent's first floor and told them to leave. One worker poured water on the rabbi, and, after a few hours, the workers brutally dragged the rabbi and members of the group off the grounds. According to the rabbi, "workers at the convent pushed them, beat them, threw water over them, insulted them, and tore their clothes."¹⁵²

Both the Jewish protestors and the Carmelite sisters tried to seek the help of the police, but the police officers were not of much use. A priest and one of the sisters who were present did not intervene to help the Jewish protestors, and Rabbi Weiss accused them of turning their backs on the Jews "just like your Church did 50 years ago."¹⁵³ This episode was an egregious instance of violent anti-Semitism in Poland.

¹⁵¹ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 80-81.

¹⁵² Ibid, 86.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 87.

Two days later, the same group of Jewish protestors went to the front of the Marian Cathedral in Kraków and were given permission to enter the courtyard of Cardinal Macharski's office, where a representative attached a written appeal to his office door. It read:

Dear Cardinal Macharski, we come in peace, but at the same time we are not afraid. We come to appeal for justice for our dead who cannot speak for themselves...As proud Jews we announce — stop praying for the Jews who were killed in the Shoah, let them rest in peace as Jews.¹⁵⁴

Later the same day, the Jewish protest group climbed the fence again and held a six-hour demonstration in front of the convent. They sang religious songs and displayed banners. There was no intervention this time, and they left in peace.¹⁵⁵ There was criticism from the Polish Episcopate because of the way that the rabbis, and members of his group, were treated by the workers two days before. The Episcopate also stated that Rabbi Weiss violated the law because he and his group of protestors had trespassed and harassed the sisters. The Episcopate claimed that such behavior could not resolve the conflict, but only make matters worse. Various Jewish organizations, and the Chief Rabbi of Poland, agreed with the Episcopate that the incidents were “contrary to Jewish religious law and the moral and ethical principles of Judaism.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Deborah G. Seward “American Jewish Group Resumes Auschwitz Convent Protest” AP News Archive {July 16, 1989} accessed May 21, 2013, <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1989/American-Jewish-Group-Resumes-Auschwitz-Convent-Protest/id-df06a8161f123bdc680d6ca83d5f2d44>

¹⁵⁶ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 89.

Protests from Jewish groups continued, and on July 23, 1989, about 100 Jews came to the convent.¹⁵⁷ They were from the Belgian Students Union and the World Jewish Congress, and they carried banners and blew a shofar, a significant gesture that recalled the biblical story of Jericho. “They were symbolically trying to bring down the walls of hate that separated Gentiles and Jews.”¹⁵⁸ The local residents were angered by the protesting and began making anti-Semitic remarks. The Jewish people retorted with their share of remarks, but overall the demonstrations were peaceful. Then, in August 1989, Cardinal Macharski suspended the implementation of the Geneva Declaration. He issued a statement that said:

The delay in meeting the unrealistic deadline for the completion of the Centre has caused a violent campaign of accusations and slander by some Jewish groups in the West; of abusive aggression, not only verbal, which was taken into [Auschwitz] itself. No respect was shown for the Sisters’ human and Christian dignity, destroying the peace which was their right. They failed to respect Christian beliefs and symbols of faith and piety. The desires and intentions of the Church were presented and interpreted in a one-sided manner and hostile intentions attributed to them. As regards the intrusion on the convent grounds and rampaging through it, I heard only one voice calling for restraint – the voice of Jewish organizations in Poland. In this atmosphere of aggressive demands and unrest to which we have been subjected, there is no way of showing a common concern for the building of a place of mutual respect, without abandoning one’s own religious and national beliefs. The desire for peace must lie at the foundations of a work of peace. I desire peace and I will not violate it. If it should be necessary, I remind my community of the need to retain dignity and self-control in word and deed. I regret that this has not been understood by the responsible people of some Jewish organizations.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ “100 Jewish Youths Hold Protest at Auschwitz Catholic Convent” Los Angeles Times {July 24, 1989} accessed May 21, 2013, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-07-24/news/mn-116_1_jewish-students.

¹⁵⁸ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 91.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 104.

His suspension caused new protests from Jewish organizations and worsened anxiety among both Poles and those who had signed the Geneva Declaration. Cardinal Decourtray, issued a brief statement, saying that he was distancing himself from Cardinal Macharski, and that the decisions made at Geneva (that the convent would be removed) would not be questioned. The World Jewish Congress considered the statement by Cardinal Macharski to be “a tragic blow for all those members of the Jewish and Catholic communities who have worked for so long to create mutual understanding and respect.”¹⁶⁰ They appealed to the Vatican to overturn the Cardinal’s decision.

On August 26, 1989, Cardinal Józef Glemp preached an extremely controversial homily to pilgrims visiting the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa, blasting Jews for wanting the convent removed, and accusing them of taking control over the media.¹⁶¹ This homily provoked critical responses even from the Polish press. Cardinal Glemp was accused of being an anti-Semite and of not wanting to cooperate with the Jewish people. He continued to maintain his stance until the criticism became too much to handle. He even canceled his trip to the United States because of Jewish demonstrations and opposition from American Catholics. It was not until the Cardinal spoke with Zygmunt Nissenbaum, chairman of the Nissenbaum Foundation and a Jewish philanthropist of

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 107.

¹⁶¹ John Daniszewski, “Primate’s Comments on Jews Stir New Controversy” AP News Archive, {August 30, 1989} accessed May 21, 2013, <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1989/Primate-s-Comments-on-Jews-Stir-New-Controversy/id-525428560ee42b41a3d422e1584c28fd>.

Polish origin, about the financing of the new center that Glemp began participating in Jewish-Christian dialogue.¹⁶²

As these discussions took place and received international attention, another incident almost derailed the progress. When asked to give a comment about Polish anti-Semitism, the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir remarked “Poles imbibe anti-Semitism with their mothers’ milk. This is something with which their tradition, their mentality is deeply imbued.”¹⁶³ Polish people from all over the world were furious about these comments.¹⁶⁴

The editor of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (The Electoral Newspaper) wrote a response saying Shamir’s statement was “untruthful, provocative, offensive to the entire Polish nation, insulting to Polish democracy and a gift to anti-Semites.”¹⁶⁵ He ended his article with the statement, “remember that no hatred — neither anti-Semitic, nor anti-Polish — can be ‘imbibed with a mother’s milk.’ Hatred is always a product of our own stupidity and immorality.”¹⁶⁶

During this same time, while Poland was transitioning to a democratic form of government, divisions within the Polish Church that had been hidden to preserve unity in the face of the Communist authorities became more pronounced. These divisions were exposed after Communism fell, and were reflected in the stances that were taken on

¹⁶² United Press International, “Cardinal Glemp Eases Stand on Auschwitz Convent” Los Angeles Times {1989} Accessed March 16, 2013, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-09-17/news/mn-507_1_auschwitz-convent

¹⁶³ Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, 121.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 122.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

issues regarding anti-Semitism and a dialogue with the Jews and Judaism. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a well-known official in both the government and the Polish Church, elaborated on the issue of these divisions. Mazowiecki suggested that there were two classifications of Catholicism in Poland, and in liberal Catholic circles, these classifications were described as the “open” Church and the “closed” Church.¹⁶⁷

These two groups were very different in their viewpoints. The group representing the “open” Church consisted of highly educated lay Catholics as well as members of the clergy. They were critics of traditional forms of religion, claiming that Catholicism lacked universal Christian values. They also accused the “closed” Church of failing to reject the anti-Judaic traditions condemned by Vatican II.¹⁶⁸ The “closed” Church was criticized for having backward views based upon an older and more conservative model of Polish Catholicism. Members of the “closed” Church considered themselves to be the true defenders of the faith and of Polish identity.¹⁶⁹

It is very probable that members of the “closed” Church were reluctant regarding dialogue with Judaism. The planned removal of the convent and of the cross from the grounds of Auschwitz may have appeared to confirm their beliefs that Jews were part of an effort to strip their Catholic identity away from them, when in fact Jews simply desired to preserve the memory of their kin who had perished in Auschwitz.

¹⁶⁷ Joanna Michlic and Antony Polonsky, “Catholicism and the Jews in Post-Communist Poland,” in *Jews, Catholics, and the Burden of History*, ed. Eli Lederhendler. (New York: Oxford Press, 2005), 39.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 40.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

G. Resolution

After all of the disputes, the back-and-forth arguments, and scandals involving both groups, along with pressure from Jews towards Catholics to do something, a resolution finally emerged. The Pope personally wrote a letter to the Carmelite Sisters instructing them to leave the convent and relocate elsewhere.¹⁷⁰ Some moved to the new convent, while others left Auschwitz entirely and went back to Poznań. The groundbreaking ceremony for the new convent and center was held on February 19, 1990, officiated by Cardinal Macharski and Minister Jacek Ambroziak.¹⁷¹ The official Interreligious Dialogue Center opened on February 22, 1992.

In 1993, despite having neither attended the meetings in Geneva nor received accurate information about them, Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek of Sosnowiec was interviewed by *Gazeta Krakowska* (The Krakow Newspaper), criticizing the situation of the Carmelite Convent as well as Father Musiał. In response, Father Musiał immediately expressed his own opinion on the matter in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, for which he was reprimanded by his superior Father Mieczysław Kożuch S.J.¹⁷²

Even though the convent in the Old Theatre building was eventually closed, the controversies did not end. In 1998, a group of Catholics calling themselves “Defenders of the Cross,” led by nationalist activist Kazimierz Świtoń, erected crosses all over the

¹⁷⁰ Pope John Paul II, “Letter to the Auschwitz Community of Discalced Carmelite Nuns” Centrum Dialogu i Modlitwy Official Declarations of the Catholic Church, accessed March 16, 2013, <http://www.cdin.pl/en/edukacja/zasoby-edukacyjne/teksty/52-oficjalne-teksty-kocioa-katolickiego/87-1993-04-09-jan-pawe-ii--list-do-karmelitanek-w-owicimiu>.

¹⁷¹ Reuters, “Ground Broken for a Center Near Auschwitz,” {February 20, 1990} accessed February 2, 2013, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-02-20/news/mn-1105_1_auschwitz-center.

¹⁷² Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 101.

gravel pit at Auschwitz. They led demonstrations on the site for over a month. Świtoń claimed that the Polish Church was separated into two: the institutional Church that included the Church officials (who did not defend the cross) and the People of God who included the people who were defined as truly being Polish and coming to the defense of the cross.¹⁷³

The Defenders of the Cross believed it was unjust that the sisters were not allowed to keep their convent in the Old Theater building, and the Defenders of the Cross wanted a place where they could pray for the dead. In reflecting on this disconnect, Father Musiał was inspired to take action. In 1998, he wrote articles about the Crosses at Auschwitz, pointing out that even though there were valid justifications for the presence of these Crosses, such as Maximilian Kolbe's execution at Auschwitz, his opinion on the matter was:

The first Christians up and until one hundred and fifty years after the death of Christ did not have crosses, prayer cards, churches, or memorials — but they did know one thing, that they were newly formed in Christ, and that was enough for them — to love God and to love your neighbor.¹⁷⁴

He also spoke out against this “War of the Crosses” saying:

The shameful cross game at Auschwitz continues. What is going on here does not have anything to do with the commemoration of the victims. For almost 45 years after the war this place did not interest either Catholics or patriots ... There is in this country an Authority [whose] mission ... required it to put an end to this battle of the crosses at Auschwitz. Everything, however, points to the fact that this Authority has buried its head in the sand, and what is worse, wants national and world public opinion to interpret this gesture of silence as a sign of virtue,

¹⁷³ Geneviève Zubrzycki “Poles Catholics and “Symbolic Jews”: Jewishness as Social Closure in Poland, in *Jews, Catholics, and the Burden of History*, ed. Eli Lederhendler. (New York: Oxford Press, 2005), 76.

¹⁷⁴ Musiał S.J., *Czarne Jest Czarne*, 114.

discernment, and civic consideration ... It is high time for the Church in Poland to awaken and raise its voice against the abuse of religious symbols for extra-religious goals. In truth, those against Christ's Cross are not ones demanding that the crosses be removed from the gravel pit ... but rather those who planted the crosses, and those who want them to remain. Christ's cross is not a tight fist. And that is what the crosses at the gravel pit in Auschwitz are.¹⁷⁵

Unfortunately, Father Musiał's voice fell on deaf ears. The skewed logic of some people was that this war, was not internally caused by Polish society or the Church, but the culprits (Jews and disobedient Catholics) were foreign agitators causing internal damage to the Polish Catholic Body.¹⁷⁶

A total of 322 crosses were placed on the site of the Carmelite Convent from Catholics coming, ironically, from all over the world.¹⁷⁷ Świtoń went on a hunger strike and threatened that he had explosives, which he was going to detonate on the site where the crosses were located if the government attempted to remove either him or the crosses. Radio Maryja, a conservative Polish Catholic radio station founded in 1991, sided with Świtoń, and broadcast news and information about the threat.

Traditionalist priests, from the Society of Pius X, were invited by Świtoń and the Defenders of the Cross to celebrate mass on the grounds of Auschwitz. Świtoń, who saw himself as an extremely patriotic and pious Catholic, claimed he genuinely wanted nothing more than to be able to pray and honor the deceased, especially Father Maximilian Kolbe. His piety and desire to honor the Polish dead, he claimed, clouded his rational thought and became a legal matter, involving the Polish government. The Polish

¹⁷⁵ Zubrzycki "Poles-Catholics" and "Symbolic Jews," 72.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 77.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 66.

government eventually decided to remove all of the crosses, with the exception of the original “Papal Cross.” The “Papal Cross” stands there to this day.¹⁷⁸ There are many people who want the cross to be permanently removed, but that is unlikely to happen. Świtoń and some of the Defenders of the Cross still gather together and hold vigils at the gate that surrounds the Old Theatre Building, hoping that one day they may be able to go inside and pray by the “Papal Cross.” He continues to document his actions and films these group meetings.¹⁷⁹

Summary

In summary, this second chapter examined the beginnings of a Jewish-Christian dialogue after *Nostra Aetate*, the document on interreligious dialogue from the Second Vatican Council. This dialogue was almost severed in Poland because of controversies such as the Carmelite Convent, the “Papal Cross,” and the “War of the Crosses” on the grounds of Auschwitz. If not for the assistance of the Subcommittee for Dialogue with Judaism in Poland, including Father Musiał, and his role as a mediator, interreligious dialogue might not have been sustained, and the controversies taking place on the grounds of Auschwitz would have persisted without effective resolution. The next chapter of this paper will discuss the life of Father Stanisław Musiał, S.J., with emphasis on five elements of his life that helped him in confronting difficult truths by initiating

¹⁷⁸ Jonathan Luxmoore, “Polish police take down all but one Auschwitz Cross” The Guardian, accessed June 28, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1999/may/29/1>

¹⁷⁹ See “Kanal Kazimierza Switonia,” September 13, 2009. Video Clips. Accessed August 11, 2012 <http://www.youtube.com/user/KazimierzSwiton?feature=watch>

interreligious dialogue between Jews and Catholics, surpassing the ordinary, by becoming a respected, mediating voice for the future of Jews in Poland.

CHAPTER III

FATHER STANISŁAW MUSIAŁ S.J.: A RESPECTED, MEDIATING VOICE FOR THE FUTURE OF JEWS IN POLAND

When asked about Father Stanisław Musiał, S.J., Michael Schudrich, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, said, “He was a simple man in search of the truth, the Polish Diogenes.”¹⁸⁰ What made Father Musiał able to confront difficult truths, ease tensions between Polish Catholics and Jews, and emerge with a respectful solution that honored the dead of Auschwitz, thus becoming a “person whose life was a witness to his faith?”¹⁸¹ This chapter will explore five elements of his upbringing: his spiritual vocation, his Jesuit education, his extensive travel in Europe, his familiarity with Jews in various contexts over many years, and his personal characteristics of patience, humility, and empathy. Most importantly, this chapter argues that, out of these five elements, his extensive travel and great education enabled him — above other priests of his day — to engage in interreligious dialogue between Polish Catholics and Jews.

A. Early Accounts of Father Musiał’s Life

¹⁸⁰ Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Question asked to author, April 4, 2013.

¹⁸¹ Donnelly, "On Relationship as a Key to Interreligious Dialogue," 135.

The earliest accounts note Father Musiał's contact with Jews — even as young as age three — and his aptitude for hard work, prayer, and learning. Information from the early part of his life comes from a long interview-turned-book, *Duchowny Niepokorny* (The Defiant Priest).¹⁸² Colleagues from the newspaper office *Tygodnik Powszechny* (General Weekly) where he worked, interviewed him, and wanted his story told. Father Musiał stipulated that their book be published after his death. A Jesuit colleague, Father Józef Augustyn, S.J., also interviewed Musiał's sisters.

Father Stanisław Musiał, S.J., was born on May 1, 1938, in a small village called Łososina Górna, Poland. His parents were Józef and Antonina Musiał, and he was the third born out of four children. He had three siblings: Władysław (1933), Maria (1935) and Barbara (1945).¹⁸³ His mother felt he was destined to become a priest “because he was born on a Sunday morning, around the time that the church bells would start ringing.”¹⁸⁴

It was during his childhood that he was first introduced to the subject of the Jewish people. He would hear stories about life before World War II, when the local priest and rabbi would stand on the steps of the church and converse with each other, or even walk around the village together.¹⁸⁵ Even though the Jewish people lived apart from their Gentile neighbors in Łososina Górna, they were mostly on friendly terms with one

¹⁸² This interview-turned-book *Duchowny Niepokorny* was compiled by Stanisław Musiał S.J., Witold Bereś and Krzysztof Burnetko

¹⁸³ Jerzy Lech Kontkowski S.J., “Stanisław Musiał SJ — Biogram” in Stanisław Musiał S.J., and Renata Bubrowiecka *Notatnik Ks. Stanisław Musiał: Jezuita w Wytartym Swetrze*. trans. Mine (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2009), 152.

¹⁸⁴ Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 24.

¹⁸⁵ Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 7.

another. Despite the fact that anti-Semitism was the norm, not every Polish Catholic was anti-Semitic. Once the war started, however, things dramatically changed for the worse.

When Father Musiał was three years old, German soldiers came to his home and found out that his family was hiding a Jewish friend. His father escaped. Just as the officer was going to shoot the rest of his family as punishment, the young Father Musiał threw himself at the feet of the soldier; the soldier was taken aback by this and left the Musiał family unharmed.¹⁸⁶ Unfortunately, Father Musiał was not able to save the life of their Jewish friend, who was tied to the back of a horse and dragged to death. He wished he could have done more to help, but of course at such a young age, he did not fully understand how limited he was.¹⁸⁷

Growing up on his family's farm, Father Musiał was accustomed to working hard; he also loved to learn. He would help his father on the farm; he loved animals, and enjoyed milking cows while reading the works of Adam Mickiewicz, a Polish poet.¹⁸⁸ He would also watch his mother milking cows and listened to her sing religious songs, which deeply moved him.¹⁸⁹ As a very pious young boy, attending church was very important to him; he would wake up early to attend Mass and was even an altar server.¹⁹⁰ According to his sister, Barbara Twaróg, he had a picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help that was given to him by a visiting missionary Redemptorist priest, and would pray to her for his

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 10.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 10-11.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 16.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 19.

¹⁹⁰ Józef Augustyn S.J. "Wspomienia o Stasiu" in *Listy Ks. Stanisława Musiała do Rodziny*, trans. Mine (Krakow: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2010), 310.

vocation. He would even pretend to be a priest by using his sisters' dresses as a priestly garb and would say the "mass" in his room.¹⁹¹

B. Student and Seminarian

Father Musiał's prayers to Our Lady of Perpetual Help were answered, ironically by two women, both named Maria. The first was his teacher, Maria Odziomek, who noticed that he was a very bright and pious student, and frequently saw him in Church. She would invite him over for breakfast after Mass, and encouraged him to put his spiritual vocation into action — she wrote letters to various religious orders on his behalf. First she wrote a letter to the Redemptorist order.¹⁹² The order rejected him, which he felt in the long run turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Odziomek also wrote to the Society of Jesus, the only order that accepted him. While he was very excited to be accepted, his parents were not. His mother was surprised that he wanted to become a priest because in spite of his interest with the priesthood, he liked going to dance parties and had many female friends. In order for him to attend the seminary, at least one of his parents had to sign a consent form. Even though he begged them, his parents would not agree because they thought he was too young to make such a decision. It was his sister, also named Maria, who forged their mother's signature in order for him to be able to leave. Their parents told her that if things did not work out for him, it would be on her conscience and not theirs.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 23-24.

¹⁹³ Augustyn S.J., "Wspomienia o Stasiu," 309-13.

In 1950, when he was just twelve years old, Father Musiał left home to attend the seminary in Nowy Sącz. Unlike some of the young seminarians, he was not homesick, and was actually excited to be going to the city. Even though Nowy Sącz was a big city where many Jews once resided, he never once heard about Jews during his time living there and found this to be rather surprising. It was as though their existence had been erased entirely from that city. He later learned the stories of some Jesuits who had been active in helping Jews escape from the ghettos.¹⁹⁴

Father Musiał was supposed to stay in the seminary at Nowy Sącz for five years. After two years, the Communist police took over the building for themselves. After a short visit home, he returned to the old seminary building one last time and spent the night there with his fellow seminarians, who also wanted to continue seminary life.¹⁹⁵ They traveled to their new seminary in Stara Wieś, where they were officially accepted as Jesuits the day after their arrival. Father Musiał was not old enough, just fifteen years old at the time, but his superiors wrote to the Vatican and received permission for those who were under-age to join.¹⁹⁶

After Father Musiał received his cassock and started in this new seminary, he followed a strict schedule which began early in the morning, and had minimal contact with his family. The increased discipline was to sort out those who were serious about the priesthood from those who were not. It was not easy being a Jesuit seminarian. In addition to the schedule and discipline, there were other practices requiring prolonged

¹⁹⁴ Musiał S.J., *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 28.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 31.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 31-33.

periods of silence, floggings while reciting Psalm 50, and frequent confession of sins, both individually and in groups. Due to fear of possible homosexuality, the seminarians were monitored and not allowed to leave their beds at night; they were not even allowed to shake hands with other seminarians. Many seminarians could not endure the pressure, discipline, or humiliation, and either left voluntarily or were expelled from the seminary.¹⁹⁷ Father Musiał succeeded, despite being told that he would not make it as a priest, and in 1957, he completed his Matura examinations¹⁹⁸ and received the seminary's equivalent to a high school diploma.

C. Going Abroad and Encountering Jewish People

Father Musiał dreamed of studying abroad. He was fortunate enough to have met the right people at the right time to make his dream a reality after his ordination. He traveled extensively through Europe to Italy, Germany, England, France, and Austria — not only enhancing his education, but also encountering Jews and learning about Jewish culture.

In August of 1963, Father Musiał was ordained as a Jesuit priest. From 1960 to 1964, he studied philosophy at the Bobolanum, the Pontifical Faculty of Theology within the University of Warsaw, but he dreamed of going abroad to study. It was difficult to study abroad because Poland was a Communist country — a person would need to either have connections or great luck in order to obtain a passport. He and his friend Heinrich

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 37-42.

¹⁹⁸ Matura is the name of the final examinations students must take in order to complete high school in Poland.

Bulinski had both, thanks to meeting Witold Bieńkowski through mutual friends. Bieńkowski's relative, Władysław Bieńkowski, worked for the Polish government as Minister of Culture and knew a prominent Communist politician, Bolesław Piasecki. These connections enabled Father Musiał and his friend Heinrich to obtain passports and study abroad as Jesuits.¹⁹⁹

In 1965, Father Musiał traveled to Italy to study philosophy at the Gregorian University in Rome. He supported himself financially, as the Jesuits could not fund him. To do so, he took a job helping a priest in the small Italian village of Molibden Piano, in the mountain region near Florence, where his love of pasta blossomed. He even met the famous pastemaker Boitoni while working at the clinic where Boitoni himself was being treated.²⁰⁰

After studying at the Gregorian University, his professor, Anton Hlickmann, encouraged him to study at a university in Germany.²⁰¹ He received a scholarship in 1968 to study in Munich and studied there for three years before traveling to England to learn English. During his travels, he kept in touch with his family in Poland by frequently sending letters and packages back home to them.²⁰²

After returning to Italy in 1972, where he lived in Florence with the Jesuits, he met Joanna Marguliez-Pik. A Polish Jew born before the Holocaust, she had been saved by nuns. Even though she was forced to convert to Christianity, in the process she

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 51-55.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 58-60.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 62.

²⁰² The book *Listy Ks. Stanisława Musiała do Rodziny*, trans. Mine (Krakow: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2010) provides the letters that Father Musiał sent to various family members, from the 1950s-1970s.

converted back to Judaism after her marriage.²⁰³ Marguliez-Pik invited Father Musiał over for tea every day, and they became good friends. He learned much about Jewish customs from Marguliez-Pik. When she was away from home, Father Musiał came over with ham and ate dinner with her servant. When Marguliez-Pik found out that pork had been in her house, she was furious because it had rendered everything unclean; even though they ate on plain dishes, she still had to break her old china and throw it away because of this violation of Kosher law.²⁰⁴

After Marguliez-Pik's mother passed away, Father Musiał came to their house with flowers. She answered the door saying that flowers are not given according to Jewish customs, so he had to throw them out into the street.²⁰⁵ He asked permission to enter and closed the door after himself; she told him that they do not close the door when somebody dies. He went into the room and went to the chair where he usually sat. When he sat down she told him that they are not allowed to sit on chairs when somebody dies.²⁰⁶ Although he was puzzled by these Jewish customs at first, he respected them. Marguliez-Pik asked him for advice when the Polish priest who had baptized her at her conversion, Father Baczyński, wrote and wanted to visit. Baczyński did not know that she had converted back to Judaism, so she pretended that she was still Catholic.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Musiał S.J., *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 64-65.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 67.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 68.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 67.

When Father Musiał's obligations took him away from Florence, the two lost touch.²⁰⁸ His travels through Europe, however, kept placing him in the company of new Jewish individuals who revealed much about both their culture and the anti-Semitism they still experienced. Two important examples were Mrs. Feinstein in France, and an unnamed anti-Semite in Bavaria.

Mrs. Feinstein was an elderly Russian Jewish woman, whom Father Musiał met in France, and whose luggage he helped carry after a train ride. After the ride, she invited him to her house for conversation. She was a wealthy woman, a dentist, who saved all of her money for the needs of Israel and Palestine, but who was not properly acknowledged for her generosity.²⁰⁹ He also became friendly with many French Jews, who did not view him as an anti-Semite because they had good experiences with the French Jesuits and saw them as highly educated, respectable men.²¹⁰ Despite these positive interactions, anti-Semitism in Europe was still evident. While traveling in Bavaria, a Christian man invited Father Musiał to his home and showed him a family album containing pictures from the war. The old man then remarked, "and here we are shooting the Jewish thieves." The man began laughing but Father Musiał was outraged and left his home. The man and his wife tried to persuade him to come back, but their efforts were unsuccessful.²¹¹

The man's behavior deeply hurt Father Musiał. This experience made him realize that, while his interactions with his Jewish friends had shown him that they deserved respect even though they did things differently than Catholics did, many people remained

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 68.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 68-69.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 70.

²¹¹ Ibid, 71.

ignorant of their humanity. Another priest, who did not have the experience of interacting with Jewish people, might have laughed along with the man instead of leaving. These encounters shaped his understanding of what the Jewish people had been dealing with for centuries and still faced.

D. Back to Poland

After Cardinal Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II in 1979, Father Musiał returned to Poland from France at the request of his Jesuit superiors. Since he knew several languages, particularly French, his superiors wanted him to work for the French section of Vatican Radio.²¹² Instead, he worked at the publishing house *Tygodnik Powszechny* under the direction of its editor-in-chief, Jerzy Turowicz, who informed him that he would be translating articles. The first article he translated was on the state of the Catholic Church in France.²¹³ His first major assignment was to write about the Mass for Solidarity that was due to take place at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdańsk on August 31, 1980.²¹⁴ When in Gdańsk, he stayed at St. Bridget's Church with Father Henryk Jankowski, who eventually became the subject of his article, *Czarne Jest Czarne* (Black is Black). Father Jankowski gave him permission to document the mass, but instructed him not to personally get involved in anything as a priest. Father Musiał learned later that Father Jankowski was very well known and respected in the Solidarity movement. He even distributed autographed pictures of himself. This lack of humility disturbed Father

²¹² Ibid, 75.

²¹³ Ibid, 77.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

Musiał, because he felt that Father Jankowski should have been handing out prayer cards rather than pictures of himself.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Ibid, 78.

E. The Return and Legacy of Father Stanisław Musiał, S.J.

In 1982, after half a year in Poland, Father Musiał left for Austria to renew his passport privileges. He returned to Poland in 1985, shortly before Christmas, because his Jesuit superiors informed him that if he did not return, he could no longer be a priest.²¹⁶ Having kept in touch with the staff at *Tygodnik Powszechny*, he returned to work as a journalist. He became actively involved in mediation between Jews and Polish Catholics during the controversies of the Carmelite Convent, “Papal Cross,” and “War of the Crosses” from 1984 onward.²¹⁷ He frequently wrote articles protesting these controversies in various Jewish and Polish publications. He also taught at the university level, traveled, gave lectures, and continued living life as a Catholic, Jesuit priest.

In 1990, Father Musiał started “Shalom,” a small Judeo-Christian organization, to help Jewish people in Kraków and throughout Poland.²¹⁸ It consisted of a room where he collected over 3,000 books written by Jews concerning Jewish history, culture, religion, and customs.²¹⁹ In 1992, Father Musiał was given the Nachshon Award in Washington D.C., from the United Jewish Appeal, and in 1995 he retired from his position as secretary of the Subcommittee for Dialogue with Judaism. In 1997, he began working as a chaplain for the Felician Sisters in Kraków.²²⁰ Also in 1997, Father Jankowski, the priest with whom Father Musiał stayed in Gdańsk, renewed anti-Semitic sentiment by

²¹⁶ Ibid, 86.

²¹⁷ See Chapter II. Controversies Regarding Polish-Jewish Relations for information about his role in these controversies.

²¹⁸ Kontkowski, S.J., “Father Stanisław Musiał S.J.— Biogram,” 160.

²¹⁹ Agata Wyszynski, Email Message to Fr. Jerzy Lech Kontkowski S.J., May 6, 2013.

²²⁰ Kontkowski, S.J., “Father Stanisław Musiał S.J.— Biogram,” 160.

remarking in a homily that Jewish people ought to be kept out of government positions.²²¹ Adam Szostkiewicz, director of the political section of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, contacted Father Musiał about writing a response which ultimately led to the article *Czarne Jest Czarne* (Black is Black).²²² The article won the Grand Press Prize, the Polish equivalent to a Pulitzer.

In the article, Father Musiał outlined how Father Jankowski was ill-advised to renew anti-Semitic bias, and that the Church was equally accountable in failing to address that which threatened the ongoing dialogue between Jews and Catholics. Because this renewal of anti-Semitism flew in the face of *Nostra Aetate*, Father Musiał regarded Father Jankowski's call to exclude Jews as sinful. This article was Father Stanisław Musiał's most famous piece of work. Sadly, he was criticized by his peers, by Catholic officials in Poland, and by many Poles for writing this article. This, of course, was not the first time Father Musiał faced criticism and rejection for his advocacy for Jews in Poland.

In September, 1998, Father Musiał was banned by his superiors from publishing any further articles on the subject of the controversies at Auschwitz, but he continued to write in spite of this.²²³ He also continued to educate himself about the Jewish people and their history. Also in 1998, he was interviewed by Agnieszka Niezgoda. This interview was included in his book *Czarne Jest Czarne*, where he said that the Jews and Poles

²²¹ "Priest condemns anti-Semitism espoused by censured colleague," JTA, accessed March 22, 2013. <http://www.jta.org/news/article/1997/11/25/4351/Priestcondemnsanti>.

²²² Stanisław Musiał S.J., "Black is Black," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, accessed February 2, 2013. http://tygodnik.onet.pl/35,0,56839,black_is_black,artykul.html.

The article is provided in english at this website. There was also a rebuttle by Father Waldemar Chrostowski entitled *Tęcza na Czarno* (Black Rainbow) His rebuttle can be found in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, Volume 21: 1968: Forty Years After*.

²²³ Kontkowski, S.J., "Father Stanisław Musiał S.J.— Biogram," 161.

shared a history.²²⁴ Before the war, Jews made up ten percent of the Polish population, yet they still were an influential group at the time of the interview — Catholic Poles were afraid of Jewish influence, fearing that Jews would overpower them and that they would lose their credibility and be economically ruined. Those kinds of phobias still exist today. The Jewish role in education at all levels was discussed — they were portrayed as a strong, and therefore threatening group. On the other hand, Jews maintained Poland's contacts with Israel, which Father Musiał felt was important because that gave Polish Jews access to both of their homelands.²²⁵

In 2000, Musiał was removed from his position as chaplain for the Felician Sisters of Kraków because his unpopular viewpoints voiced through his articles. These articles were regarded as opposing the views of the Church.²²⁶ Despite the criticism, rejection, ban on writing, and deteriorating health, Father Musiał continued to write articles for various publications such as *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Polin*, *Midrash*, etc. Most of the time, he made it a point to get “under the skin” of Catholic officials in Poland by exposing the realities regarding dialogue between Polish Catholics and their Jewish neighbors.

He also pointed out that anti-Semitism was even embedded in the Polish language; Polish people often used the terms “Żydek” or “Żydki” for Jew, which are considered belittling due to the tone in which they are expressed. He promised himself that if he heard such anti-Semitic language, then he would stir up the courage to correct

²²⁴ Stanisław Musiał S.J. and Agnieszka Niezgoda, “Uzdrowi nas Europa,” in *Czarne Jest Czarne*, 144.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Kontkowski, S.J., “*Father Stanisław Musiał S.J.— Biogram*,” 160.

the person who was using such language, even if the person was his superior, such as a bishop.²²⁷ For Father Musiał, Jewish people are living proof of God's presence on earth because they brought Christians the Ten Commandments and faith in one God, which to him was the most precious thing for the world.²²⁸ Many Jews were grateful for Father Musiał and the work that he did for them. He was even invited to attend and give lectures in the United States.

Father Musiał was given the Jan Karski and Pola Nirenska award in 2002, endowed by Karski at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, in honor of the work that he did with interreligious dialogue between Jews and Catholics in Poland.²²⁹ This award with a cash prize of \$5,000, is given to authors of published works documenting Polish-Jewish relations and Jewish contributions to Polish culture.

Father Musiał had one wish before his death: that a rabbi would say a Kaddish prayer for him at his funeral. Then his life as a Catholic would be complete.²³⁰ In February, 2004, Father Musiał developed a brain clot and had a stroke. Several weeks later he went into a coma from which he did not awake and he passed away on March 5, 2004. His funeral took place ten days later.²³¹ A delegation from Israel, including three rabbis, attended his funeral. While Cardinal Macharski presided, Rabbi Aaron

²²⁷ Jemglo Archives—Father Stanisław Musiał 2 {2013}, video clip, Youtube, accessed February 2, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Chick-BgwsG>.

²²⁸ Jemglo Archives—Father Stanisław Musiał 1 {2013}, video clip, accessed February 2, 2013, Youtube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85mJk7WE4RA>.

²²⁹ "Jesuit Priest Honored- Stanisław Musiał Awarded Karski-Nirenska Prize" YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, accessed March 22, 2013. <http://www.yivoinstitute.org/pdf/yedies194.pdf>.

²³⁰ Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny*, 255.

²³¹ Kontkowski S.J., "Stanisław Musiał SJ — Biogram," 162.

Halberstam from Jerusalem honored his final wish and recited a Kaddish prayer.²³² The fact that the delegation from Israel was present was a respectful symbolic gesture for Father Musiał because Jews do not ordinarily like, or even have permission to attend, funerals of non-Jews.²³³ In 2009, Father Musiał was posthumously honored in several ways: articles were written about him, a conference was held in his memory in Poland,²³⁴ and the Stanisław Musiał, S.J. Award was established. The award is given annually to recognize those who do work with Christian-Jewish and Polish-Jewish relations.²³⁵

Summary

In summary, this third chapter continued the discussion of the fragile relationship between Jews and Catholics in Poland. Father Musiał had a positive role in influencing that relationship. His life story shows that he grew up in an ordinary, pious household and that he found his vocation to become a priest. He was fortunate enough to study abroad and have interactions and friendships with Jewish people and opportunities to learn more about their culture. This personal understanding was the beginning of his enlightenment and his desire to help. If he had had a different educational background and no interactions with Jewish people, this work would not have existed.

²³² Musiał S.J., Bereś, and Burnetko, *Duchowny Niepokorny, Duchowny Niepokorny*, 261.

²³³ Bernard Alter OSB “Jezuita w Wytartym Swetrze,” Stanisław Musiał and Renata Bubrowiecka, *Notatnik Ks. Stanisław Musiał: Jezuita w Wytartym Swetrze*, 99.

²³⁴ “Konferencja ku pamięci ks. Musiała,” Kierunki.Studia., accessed March 22, 2013 <http://www.kierunki.studia.net/ludzie-nauki/206-konferencja-ku-pamieci-ks-musiala>

²³⁵ “75 lat temu urodził się o. Stanisław Musiał SJ,” Sadecczanin, accessed May 6, 2013 <http://www.sadeczanin.info/kosciol-i-religia/10/75-lat-temu-urodzil-sie-o-stanislaw-musial-sj,46505#.UYgud1f9fZc>.

It was at *Tygodnik Powszechny* that Father Musiał eventually got more involved with the Jewish people of Poland by writing articles about issues pertaining to Jewish-Catholic relations. Even though his work was helpful for Jewish-Catholic relations, he was criticized by his peers and superiors, and even though he fought back, he suffered internally to the point of isolation. His life and his work had a great impact, however; and he received several awards and international acclaim. He was also posthumously honored with articles written about him, a conference in his memory, and an award named in his honor.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that hostility towards Jews permeated Poland before, during, and after World War II, thus instilling fear and distrust in the minds of Jews. Ordinary people such as Father Stanisław Musiał S.J., however, transcended this hostility by respecting both Polish Jews and Catholics and taking the time to learn about Jewish culture. He was fortunate to have had the opportunities to encounter and befriend Jewish people. The fact that he had such opportunities and chose to learn about the Jews and their culture played a crucial role in the work that he accomplished for Jewish-Catholic relations in Poland. This, along with his ability to endure pressure and suffering, clearly, were the secrets to his success.²³⁶

Father Musiał had the courage to confront difficult truths while others wanted to ignore these truths. He was criticized, but this criticism did not deter Father Musiał because he had the evidence right in front of his eyes to support the views he was defending. He did not choose sides, but simply knew that his words and actions were meant to be helpful for both groups, even though some could not see the overall bigger picture as clearly as he could. Those who criticized him should have been the ones to join him in seeking to confront these difficult truths, not in choosing to ignore them. Despite these obstacles, his faith and willingness to help others remained strong even though he

²³⁶Agata Wyszynski, Email Message to Stanisław Obirek, April 30, 2013.

In an email addressed to Stanisław Obirek, Father Musiał's friend and former colleague, the question was asked of what he thought was the secret to Father Musiał's success. He replied that his success was in his suffering.

was suffering internally, even to the point of isolation in his final years of life. Although he died, he will never be forgotten and has left behind a legacy encouraging others to imitate his words and actions to help the Jewish people in Poland.

In his lifetime, Father Musiał did what he could to show his love to others by understanding, embracing, and coming to the defense of those who were different. He did not have to do this, but he chose to do this because he knew that as a Catholic, it was the right thing to do. It was fitting that Father Musiał's friends (Father Michał Czajkowski and Janusz Poniewierski) described him using the quote from Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel: "A religious man is a person who holds God and man in one thought at one time, at all times, who suffers harm done to others, whose greatest passion is compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair."²³⁷

When reflecting upon Father Musiał and the circumstances he endured, we must also take the time to examine ourselves as well as the ordinary people around us who, like Father Musiał, do what is right for others. In spite of the growing respect for diversity, we live in an unjust world where, unfortunately, many people continue to judge and persecute those who are different, whether because of their religion, skin color, gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. We should ask ourselves: would we have the courage to do the same as Father Musiał, when faced with such circumstances in our lives? Would we be willing to risk our relationships with family and friends, our careers, and our health (physical, mental, spiritual) in order to confront difficult truths? Can we show our love to others who are different by understanding, embracing, and

²³⁷ Father Michał Czajkowski, "*Empatia*," *Przegląd Powszechny* 2009, vol 1, 84-89 and Janusz Poniewierski, "Ludzki Książ, Dobry Człowiek" DEON.pl, accessed May 21, 2013 <http://www.deon.pl/wiadomosci/komentarze-opinie/art,583,ludzki-ksiaz-dobry-czlowiek.html>

coming to their defense when it is not the popular choice, but is still the right choice? Can we become people whose lives imitate that of Father Musial? If more people do as he did and lived as he lived, then more controversies like the ones he faced would be resolved, and the world would be a better place.

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